RECOGNITION AND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

Joni Maya Cherbo and Harold L. Vogel

Is creativity defined simply by the innate capacities of individuals to discover and invent something new and different or also by how such innovation is received within a specific social context? While the first understanding of creativity is highly valued in the industrially developed world, there have been and remain many societies where other interpretations are the norm – as Bharucha's chapter has just argued. In contemporary society, artistic creativity is a high risk endeavour as well. Most artistic products fail to cover their investment let alone find recognition. Analsying the social context, the authors identify stages in the process of bringing an artistic work to fruition and illustrate the many social factors that can assist or hinder its reception. Artistic creativity is seen as being enhanced by an increasing global interconnectivity between peoples, as technology enables and encourages access to new audiences and provides outlets for artistic careers. Globalization is also fostering creative expression through the acceptance of a widening range of artistic fare such as master crafts and 'native' art, along with national and international policies designed to assist artists' careers.

On creativity

Creativity has become a contemporary buzzword. It is seen as being an essential ingredient for spurring economic growth and gains in productivity. Everything from corporate innovation and technological advancement, to the rehabilitation of cities and advancing education and learning, is seen as dependent on creative endeavours. In addition, in most societies creativity is seen as being a desirable personal trait – and also perhaps as something that can be taught. Yet the term is often too casually applied, and finer distinctions ought to be drawn – becoming a blogger, or creating a movie for YouTube, is not necessarily being creative or producing a creative product. By creative we mean a combination of distinct individual attributes that have produced something which their social world has labeled as creative.

Howard Gardner reminds us that individuals are born with different capabilities. Some have enhanced mechanical aptitudes, others visual acumen; some a remarkable ability to retain factual information, others mathematical aptitudes (Gardner, 2006). The arts do not have a monopoly on creativity. Creativity is possible within any of these 'intelligences'. Individuals are born with innate capacities, but the social worlds in which they live may enhance or hinder these coming to fruition, let alone being acknowledged as remarkable or creative. A mathematically gifted individual may have gone unnoticed living in a farming community in fourteenth-century Europe.

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Creativity can be thought of as a two-sided coin; one side representing individual capacities, the other the reception of something new within its social context. The creative can be conceptualized on a continuum ranging from something such as the 'Stikki-Clip', a patented office product, to Einstein's theory of relativity. In the cultural areas, as distinct from the physical sciences, any artistic product depends more on its reception than its ability to prove something that can be scientifically replicated.

Some cultural expressions and products will find acclaim in certain eras and communities while not in others. Had the Impressionists plied their artistic visions one hundred years earlier, when the French Academy was in control of artistic expression and before the advent of paints that could be used outdoors, they would have ended up on the scrapheap of visual arts history rather than among its acclaimed masters. Mozart's genius today is elevated way beyond the esteem shown him in his own lifetime. Some artists and art works acclaimed in their own eras fall into oblivion in other times or simply become a part of the historical record: the large-scale history paintings of the French Academic period provide one such an example. Works created for reasons other than recognition also often become valorized inadvertently. Samuel Beckett, for instance, wrote *Waiting for Godot* for relaxation and considered it a bad play (Throsby, 2001).

How then does a creative expression come to be found boring or irrelevant, derivative or novel, creative or iconic? There is a long tradition of modernist thought that claims that true artistic expression is based on absolute and intrinsic aesthetic qualities which are fixed and inherent to a cultural work. This tradition claims that truly creative works are transcendent, will have universal appeal, and will generally encounter worldwide agreement as to their stature as masterpieces. Some aestheticians and art historians have attempted to codify what constitutes absolute aesthetic value in various artistic disciplines. In the last couple of decades, however, this tradition has been challenged by practitioners from different disciplines, in particular the social sciences and linguistics, who have put forth a more relativistic position. They claim that cultural value is a shifting phenomenon and that no absolute, inherent value can be placed on a work of art, as it is subject to the values, taste, and conditions of its time and place. Acceptance of this school of thought has led to what some have called a 'crisis of value in cultural theory' as it denies any accepted hooks on which to judge artistic products. Although a visual object can be looked at using aesthetic properties – harmony, line, colour, balance, form, etc. – the valuation of these properties is seen as a sociological phenomenon (Peterson and Anand, 2004).

Our absorption with creativity and creative genius, both products of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, has blinded us to the crucial role of society in determining the worth of any artistic product. In effect, the valorization of creativity and innovation is a cultural phenomenon itself. In most artistic traditions prior to the nineteenth century, the repetition of established cultural expressions was the norm. Deviations from tradition were discouraged or nominal. While acknowledging differences among individuals in artistic abilities, the focus of this chapter (based on US data) is primarily on what social factors will aid or hinder the ascendancy of select artistic expressions.[1]

Creative expressions are high risk

In the contemporary West, creative products are often defined as 'experience goods', meaning that the reception of these products is subjective – no one will know their outcome until it has been put forth for public consumption. Film and music companies, book and magazine publishers, video game designers, casino and theme-park operators, fine artists alike, do not so much sell goods and services as they do 'experiences'. Creative expressions, therefore, are seen as high-risk ventures because tastes are constantly changing and often fickle: what resonated with the audiences of yesterday, might not resonate as well with those of today or tomorrow. The list of disappointments in all the arts is extensive. Even the most seasoned artistic practitioners have trouble predicting the outcome of an artistic work. For example, *Star Wars*, *Back to the Future*, and *Lord of the Rings* were all at one point or another rejected by major studios as being too expensive or were perceived at the time as being too outside of the mainstream. And even highly promoted works, like the extensively marketed feature film *Last Action Hero* (1993, Sony) starring Arnold Schwartzenegger, are not assured of success and may indeed turn out to be box-office

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duds. Contrarily, the list of unexpected successes, such as *The Blair Witch Project* movie, The *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* animations, or the *Harry Potter* series of books, reminds us of the occasional happy serendipity of artistic fare.

On average, out of every ten major-distributed films only three might do better than break even, and that includes the revenues generated in domestic, international, DVD/VHS, television, and nascent Internet markets (De Vany, 2004: 82). The success ratio is actually lower if the number of 'independent' films that are produced but not able to find distribution are also counted. In US television as well, *Seinfeld* began its NBC network run inauspiciously, gaining poor ratings (and with Fox declining a later offer to pick it up). The ABC network was meanwhile uneasy about the contents of *All in the Family*, which was then selected by CBS because the network badly needed to replace fading shows and update its image.

Historically, only about 20 to 25 per cent of all new live theatre pieces that preview on Broadway make back their investment (Rosenberg and Harburg, 1993). *West Side Story* – which ultimately became one of the most revered and successful musicals – had a tortuous time finding backers and was almost abandoned. In the 1990s, of the 125 new American operas that premiered, only 12 had a second production. And of the 82 new operas presented since 1999 by the New York City Opera's Vox performance series, only 39 received full stagings. The hit ratio in American publishing isn't much better. About 35 per cent of popular books are returned to the warehouse unsold (Carvajal, 1996), and in music it is estimated that at most perhaps 2 per cent of the new releases (i.e., excluding catalogues) might account for the more than 80 per cent of the sales.

In all the creative fields, only a few artists out of many aspirants become highly acclaimed. Novelists such as John Grisham, Danielle Steele, Phillip Roth, and Harold Robbins have, for examples, all written widely popular bestsellers. Yet even in a group of this kind only a handful have received professional peer-based awards. And few will receive the iconic status of an Ernest Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald. Consider the multitude of visual and performing artists – musicians, actors, painters, photographers – who vie to make a living selling their art. Most have to supplement their income by other work to exist. And success can be transient; today's hot new artist can be forgotten tomorrow, and conversely those previously overlooked can suddenly 'be found'.

Still, those fortunate enough to reach the very top of their profession often remain in demand and command astronomical fees. This is what Frank and Cooke (2005) called the winner-take-all phenomenon. For example, auction prices of newly recognized and select established painters can command millions. In the recording field, the largest advance was reportedly the $10 million *per album* for six albums (*if* said albums sold over 5 million units each) on the deal that *Prince* signed with Warner Brother Records in 1992. And more recently, Madonna's 2007 package deal with concert-promoter Live Nation Inc. reportedly included a general advance of $17.5 million, advance payments for three albums of $50 to $60 million, and an additional payment of $50 million in cash and stock for the right to promote her tours (Smith, 2007). In films, stars such as Tom Hanks, George Clooney and Julia Roberts receive in the vicinity of $20 million in acting fees, a percentage of the distributor's gross return after a certain sum has been reached, and an unusually large percentage of the 'back end' (DVDs, syndication, etc.) – all for what might amount to at most just a few weeks or months of 'work'. Indeed, television's back end syndication payments for project participants (including actors, producers, writers, and directors) can be even more remunerative than their participation in movies. Shows such as *Cosby*, *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, *Cheers*, *Everyone Loves Raymond*, and *Frasier* all earned more than $1 billion each over their subsequent (sometimes third or fourth) syndication cycles.

Artistic recognition takes the form of a pyramid with numerous aspirants on the bottom and few on the top. In economic terms, supply far exceeds demand: we overproduce aspiring artists given what the society can sustain. One of the more interesting questions, then, is why so many young people desire to become artists or work in the arts even when knowing that they may not be able to support such a career choice let alone become 'recognized'. The other curiosity is why most of the West has become so invested in sustaining the careers of artists, which are normally quite fragile, unpredictable, and unsupportable. In the past, official academies and guilds used to control the supply of artists in their respective eras and societies, but this is no longer the case. The explosion of art

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schools in the 1970s in the USA, for instance, made it possible for almost anyone to train for a career in the arts and to dream of artistic success. The current system perpetuates this disjunction between supply and demand.

Conceptualizing artistic careers

Careers in the arts do not happen by chance; they are created. To understand the elusiveness of artistic success or how a creative expression becomes designated as creative we need to grasp the complexity of the artistic career path – the many steps that may allow a work of art to come to fruition, to find an audience, to attain a critical reception. Making a career in the arts, becoming established, and building a reputation are all exceedingly difficult. There are many contenders, the career obstacles are formidable and not well understood by most new-comers, the risk of failure is high, and randomness and luck are part of the process. The artist who plies his trade well, maximizing all the opportunities available to him, may still end up disappointed. And some whose work is deeply admired by peers can fail to find larger recognition.

Career paths will differ among arts disciplines and within different countries and regions. For instance, in the USA, commercial artists have different career paths from those who work in the non-profit world; individual artists face different career issues to those who work in teams; and a painter's career issues will vary from those of novelists or jazz musicians. Even so, there are some conceptual similarities. Artists must obtain *training* in their craft. They must find time to create – *origination* – either as solo individuals or as teams. They must also find a way to exhibit and show their work and to create an audience for it – *presentation/promotion*. Selling the artistic work is contingent upon effective *distribution* networks, and *evaluation* is central to gaining recognition and acclaim.

Although the following examples of artistic career trajectories are US-based, the conceptual framework for artists' careers presented here – along with the high risk involved in creative recognition – are no doubt applicable to most of the industrially developed world. How various nations manage these career passages has a strong bearing on an artist's potential for career building and creative recognition.

Training

Aspiring artists will attend a credited university or college art programme or train in a professional art school not connected with institutions of higher education. Aspiring ballerinas, for instance, generally start training at a very young age and continue into professional dance schools in their teens. Their careers start and end early due to the physical demands of their art. By contrast, architects, who must become certified to practise, require extensive advanced training beyond college but can practise well into their later years. Attending a school of repute can also be a career bonus for artists. Connections and close friendships with fellow artists and professional mentors during the formative training period and beyond can become essential assets, early on putting aspiring artists in touch with well-connected individuals in their fields. And artists may continue taking auxiliary courses throughout their careers to either enhance their existing skills or learn new ones. After their initial education, for example, it would not be unusual to find actors studying with a renowned teacher or taking seminars on how to audition and put a portfolio together.

Origination

Origination is the R&D phase of an artist's career. Research and development refers to the entire range of support necessary for an artist or an artistic team to bring a work to fruition. This can include mentors, working spaces and raw material supplies, feedback, creative partnerships, technical assistance, funding, and so forth. The solitary novelist obviously has needs which are different from those who are part of a team producing a new opera or movie. Financial support is crucial to this career stage. It can come from a variety of sources – foundation grants, state and local arts agencies, residencies, investors, clients, awards from service associations, and paid work that allows time for artistic creation.

The Ford Foundation in conjunction with a consortium of other foundations recently made a commitment to fund emerging artists. The Theatre Communications Group gives awards to new directors and theatre writers. Publishing houses offer advances to those writers whose work they think will be profitable. Theatre angels give enhancement monies for promising plays. Local and state arts agencies fund artists, and some municipalities provide cultural districts where art can be bought and sold without incurring taxes.[2]

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Universities are often generators of new works. Yale Repertory Theatre, Harvard's American Repertory Theatre, and Brown University's collaboration with Trinity Repertory or New York University's Gray Arts Gallery have well established performing arts venues on campus. Universities also support cutting-edge works and are often the first line of origination and presentation. Modern dance, for instance, originated in elite girls' colleges on the Eastern seaboard.

Nevertheless, resources for origination are frequently problematical. Broadway has seen a continual decline of new plays and musicals originating on the Great White Way. Insiders attribute this to conservative producers unwilling to speculate on new and relatively expensive productions. The film and television industries, moreover, spend exorbitant sums on R&D, sifting through an abundance of script submissions, overbearing script notes, producer pitches and pilot programmes, and rewrites. Top writers can receive over $1 million for a draft and over $150,000 a week for rewrites. But even so, there is no assurance of ultimate success. A project can burn through millions and still be discarded, and what survives at the end is not necessarily the best artistically.

Presentation/promotion

Art must be seen and heard and experienced. It must also be promoted to create an audience. Sometimes presenters are also promoters; other times these functions are done by separate agencies. Intermediaries such as dealers, investors, and agents all become important at this stage. Acting as gatekeepers, it is they who select and promote art work and artists they think have a chance to become successful. Each art discipline has its own traditional venues such as opera houses, galleries, museums, and theatres along with designated alternative spaces where new art can be previewed. As already noted, colleges and university theatres and art galleries will often provide previews of new works. There are also more than 2500 film festivals internationally for aspiring filmmakers, and numerous art fairs and summer festivals for visual and performing artists. Coffee houses will often display new art on their walls and entertain a musical ensemble. Airports have been known to show fine artists. And the Internet is increasingly a presentation and promotion vehicle for visual artists, film makers, musicians and writers.

Established arts institutions, such as the large opera houses, will typically feature a new opera as part of their yearly programming. Similarly, successful dance companies may introduce a new work in their season. The reputations of these institutions, combined with their marketing, promotional, and publicity budgets, can provide a potential lift to an artist's career. The mission of select nonprofit theatres is precisely to feature new artists and art work, while in commercial theatres, angels and other financial backers function as promoters of new artistic fare. Gallery dealers are always scouting for new, compelling artists whom they can assiduously promote through their sponsorship of shows and connections to potential collectors, museums, and journal writers. The role of book editors and agents is to discover promising writers and to promote their books in the media and at venues around the country. The same goes for movie agents and the actors they represent.

Sometimes talent is so overwhelmingly above average that the artist receives almost immediate and widespread attention and backing. Contracts are granted and extended, endorsement fees are readily forthcoming, and a major career is launched. Singer Luciano Pavarotti was a case in point. Yet other music successes, especially in the pop field, may depend on a carefully designed and nurtured process of promotion. Disney's recent *Hannah Montana* (Miley Cyrus) or *High School Musical* franchises, or the late 1990s bands such as *'N Sync* and the *Backstreet Boys,* fit this description. On occasion a celebrity has provided a significant promotional resource. Oprah Winfrey's book club, begun in 1996, has helped many new writers garner attention and sales. In view of the diminishing venue for new writers in part due to the consolidation of publishing houses and bookstores, her club has proven to be an important channel for authors to reach audiences for literary fiction.

Distribution

Often the agency that presents and promotes the art will act as its distributor but sometimes these functions are separated. In either situation, however, it is the distributor's mandate to find the most advantageous and lucrative markets, whether domestic or international.

Operas, theatre companies and symphonies that have showcased a new work will often look to make additional presentations beyond their halls. Gallery owners will often open or align with galleries elsewhere, or will provide funding to advance a painter

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and exert better control over his output and pricing. Entertainment conglomerates will also test various markets, promoting and distributing films, music, television programmes, and books internationally.

No matter what the product is, however, technology is transforming presentation, promotion, and distribution while at the same time diminishing the influence of those gatekeepers of the past. The Internet is already a primary new channel for the distribution of music, films, other visual arts, and books. And its far-reaching effects can be seen from the fact that video stores are being rapidly rendered obsolete, that audiences can now rent DVDs and download favourite programmes and songs from practically anywhere, and that some independent producers are already commercially and creatively active and able to bypass the major studios by using the Internet as a possible distribution pathway.

The effects can also be seen in the book publishing industry, where editors and agents are overwhelmed by submissions from eager new authors seeking access to the marketplace. Many such authors will abandon their dreams or hone their writing skills elsewhere, yet some will persist in finding new outlets for their work. The Internet is the logical place to carve out a viable channel to promote and distribute books and stories.

Evaluation

There are a number of formal and informal reputation-making awards given by each arts discipline. The Oscars and Golden Globes for film, the Pulitzer Prize for literature, the Tonys for live theatre, The Emmys for television, the Grammys and Country Music Awards in music, and the Pritzker Prize for Architecture – all are examples of a recognition that helps to confirm, and sustain, an artist's career and reputation. Established theatre, music and visual arts critics who work for journals, newspapers, and media outlets are also creators and purveyors of value. It is often said that praise by a *New York Times* drama critic can make or break a Broadway or off-Broadway show. However, sometimes word-of-mouth can outstrip the official critics; *Rent*, for example, while not generally favoured by the critics, nevertheless went on to be a long-running box office success. This is similar to Steven Sondheim's theatrical pieces, where many received mixed notices from critics who considered his lyrics far superior to what was at first thought to be unusual and unmelodic music. Their reception and evaluation among his peers, however, were significant, and over time the critics began to acclaim his uniqueness and creativity. Awards followed, and today Sondheim is considered an icon in the musical theatre field along with other lions such as Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, Lorenzo Hart, and Jerome Kern.

Broadway's long-running *Cats*, produced by the formidable Andrew Lloyd Webber, was initially greeted inhospitably by the theatre world's resident experts. Good promotion and word-of-mouth held the day, however, and *Cats* has ultimately become the longest running musical on Broadway. The same thing has also frequently happened in films. No one expected *Casablanca* to attain the recognition that it did. And *Star Wars*, initially turned down by Universal, touched an audience nerve and became the pivotal film of its time, on a par with the reception *Gone With The Wind* had received in its day.

Creativity and globalization: trends and policy

What are the forces that relate to creativity and globalization? This question may be more amenable to concrete, individual examples of cultural connections, hybrids, rejections, etc. than to an assessment of broader trends. However, with that caveat in mind, we offer a few considerations.

Connectivity

An essential characteristic of globalization is the enhanced connectivity between peoples, cultures and nations around the globe. All of this is encouraged and supported by the Internet-based expansion of international business firms, increased tourism, the proliferation of civil society organizations, and professional networks. Increased connectivity makes the artistic fare of different peoples, nations and places more available to others and heightens the potential for a cross-fertilization of creative expressions. Connectivity facilitates the formation of creative unions and hybrid artistic expressions, and both multiplies and complexifies the number of possible career paths and outlets for artists. For instance, digital recording and playback devices now allow different world musical expressions to be co-opted, blended, and mixed in ways that have never before been possible. And international

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financial and creative alliances between different cultural traditions are being formed in films and television programming. Hollywood – with the second largest number of feature film releases (around 600 a year) – is beginning to co-finance and distribute joint projects with India's Bollywood (around 1,100 releases a year) (Schuker, 2008).

Technology

Technology is key to shifting creative possibilities globally. Creative efforts have always been affected by the technological environment in which they are produced. Outdoor painting had to wait for paints that did not dry out readily. Movies did not exist until lenses, cameras, film stock, lighting, and electric motors had been developed. In the 1930s television could at best be described as a radio service with pictures, but of course it has turned out to be much more than that. And in little more than twenty years the Internet's effect on the ways we produce and receive and respond to arts and culture and the ways in which we conduct our businesses and our lives has already been at least as profound. The global trends in technology continue, now and in the future, to affect artistic efforts globally – in ways yet to be experienced or understood.

Technological advances in products and services related to cell phones, DVDs, iPods, digital books, and the Internet are dramatically connecting individuals worldwide and transforming all stages of creative careers. And the changes extend well beyond the most affluent populations as the new technologies – faster, cheaper, and more portable – empower and enable people in poorer countries to jump directly into the age of digital communications. More than ever before in human history, art, in the form of music recordings, video presentations, reading and visual materials and books, and net conversations, can occur across time zones – anytime and anywhere. An outgrowth of this is that there is an accompanying gradual movement away from text-based to more visually-based information delivery systems. The latest technologies make it possible to involve the consumer of art and cultural products and services in much more intensely visual and audible experiences. This shift is reflected in the global interest in social networking sites and services like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. And it is evident in the growth of video games, and in the declining readership of newspapers and books. For the legacy media and entertainment companies, this has created a huge challenge – to adapt to this new world order by developing business models that can sustain and grow profitability. Thus far, however, the dollars being lost in the fading legacy businesses are being replaced only by pennies from the digital arena.

As for artists, it is evident that career trajectories at all stages are being affected. Thanks to the new technologies artists can, for example, easily set up their own web sites, show and sell their work, and endlessly chat and blog and evaluate the works of others. Singers and musicians can sell their CDs and link to iPods. Filmmakers can use some of the new software to create and sell affordable films. And authors can digitally post their works to a worldwide audience of readers. It is not yet entirely clear, however, as to how and to what extent such new technologies will transform traditional career paths. Everything is still embryonic.

Policy

Creative expressions will obviously blossom more readily in situations that value them. Many countries do not put a premium on promoting the new. Some lack an infrastructure that supports artistic creativity, while others value traditional modes of expression over the new. One of the normative assumptions in the West is a belief in experimentation and innovation. Here there is a tacit acceptance that creative content is an engine of the knowledge economy and that artistic skills will be essential to the new order; that artists bring a special worth and meaning to life; that we need to level the playing field to give all artistic aspirants a chance to find their voice and create; and, that many artistic endeavours, even those that do not make it in the marketplace, might be worthy of public support.[3]

Where experimentation is valued and where artists are supported at various junctures of the career process, the soil is ripe for the creative work of many varieties to root and blossom. Many affluent countries have numerous policies and programmes that that can help to promote creative expressions and artistic careers. Assistance can range from programmes that provide direct funding to artists; tax structures that provide guaranteed minimum wages for new artistic entrants; loans for new art collectors; municipal cultural districts with tax benefits for artists and purchasers; organizations that assist with employment, grants, health, housing and retirement benefits; government-sponsored cooperatives that support indigenous art forms; and so forth.

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Policies that support artistic creativity exist at the trans-national level as well. The World Observatory on the Social Status of the Artist, resulting from UNESCO's World Congress 1997 on that topic, provides an informational overview of the status of artists worldwide on a variety of issues. Also, the European Institute for Contemporary Culture (ERICarts), a nonprofit research institute established in 1997 and located in Bonn, Germany, started on-going, comparative research for the European Parliament in 2006 on the challenges facing European artists in relation to labour, tax and social security legislation.

Inclusiveness

Since the turn of the twentieth century, artistic value has widened its boundaries considerably. Expressions once considered as outside of official canons of acceptance – originally based on European high art – have entered the mainstream. For instance, hip hop, pop art, jazz, the tango, bossa nova, the blues, outsider art, photography, and modern dance have all evolved beyond their roots and become internationally accepted, and even sometimes acclaimed (Zolberg and Cherbo, 1997). And the trend continues. More recently, vernacular art forms emanating from grassroots community-based arts activities such weaving, wood working, basket making, jewellery design – and also indigenous arts including native American Indian, Alaskan, and Australian aboriginal art – have found worldwide audiences and markets.

Summary

The human creative faculty is like a weed, capable of growing practically anywhere. A remarkable voice, an unusual colourist, a compelling storyteller, are often immediately identifiable. Creativity, it seems, is a generic and genetic part of our species. Yet creative potential can remain stillborn or slip through the cracks. What is worth remembering is that no artist or art forms are inevitable successes. The infrastructure that can bring them to acclaim is essential in understanding the life of any creative endeavour.

Box 2.1 Digital arts and the cultural expression of young people

The creative potential in all of us needs to be nurtured. Today, the digital environment has opened up new fields of meaning, enabling us to apply, modify and combine elements from various converging sources, drawing them from a variety of different contexts and making them useable. Local culture and environment are among the principal sources for developing the diversity of knowledge and creativity and therefore serve as a key point of departure for creative digital expressions. It is important to help young people realize that the realities and experiences within their own immediate environment can be valid topics to talk about and share with peers from different parts of the world. Digital content can be simply produced through acquired knowledge and trained skills without context. However, creative aspirations and empirical reflections relevant to local cultures can guarantee socio-cultural awareness and promote an equitable digital environment. In this context, is technology merely a useful tool in the digital creative process? Is its contribution limited to giving form to original ideas and acts? In the digital age, it is even more essential to see how creative content is communicated and received by others. Young people should be encouraged in their freedom to actively deliver their creative expressions as much as to develop them, whether within or outside the formal education system.

Bridging the digital divide does not necessarily mean possessing the most updated equipment or being an expert in digital software. A greater barrier is the creative content gap. Young people should be aware of their right to the opportunity of developing their own creative talents even with limited digital means. This is truly decisive to the long-term diversity of creative digital expressions. Today we have more trans-spatial connections than ever before in human history. The Internet might not be able to provide a physical meeting space but it has the potential to enlarge the range of participants and audiences, to encounter people from diverse geographical locations and cultural backgrounds. This is why supporting young people's access to cross-cultural knowledge-sharing and exchange platforms is crucial. This is the lesson of UNESCO's 'Young Digital Creators' programme, an online initiative that encourages young people from all over the world to connect with each other in exploring key societal issues, e.g.,

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'The sound of our water' programme that invited young people to reflect on water issues, either connected to daily life or related to specific issues such as environment, culture, industry, etc., and to integrate digital sound into their own creation of a water soundscope. 'Scenes and sounds of my city' allows them to create their own digital art pieces reflecting on the urban environment and to discover experiences across a diverse range of cultural identities while 'Youth communicating on HIV/AIDS' is designed for young people to express their thoughts and feelings on this world phenomenon in relation to specific social and cultural issues. Indeed, young people everywhere can raise questions, exchange views, make collective reflections, join their efforts and act together, acting as responsible global citizens – provided the development of their digital creativity embedded in local cultures is properly nurtured.

Indrasen Vencatachellum

Box 2.2 Inspiring innovation and creativity in the workplace

With fierce competition among businesses worldwide, firms are on a never-ending search for the most effective ways to raise productivity and, ultimately, profit. In recent years the workplace has seen the emergence of various methods to inspire creativity and imagination among employees for this purpose.

As playing video games, also known as gaming, has increased amongst individuals of all ages, even non-technology-based businesses in the United States have begun to use this pastime to their advantage by designating office space for the sole purpose of gaming. The experiment seems to be working, as firms report that not only do their game rooms help boost morale and camaraderie, but are also helping to attract younger workers and increase productivity (Edelhauser, 2007). Pandemic, a major video game developer with offices in Los Angeles and Brisbane, Australia, even employs a full-time Quality of Life Manager to coordinate a range of sporting and recreational activities including soccer, softball, and basketball. Further, Pandemic sponsors numerous company clubs and activities such as poker nights, movie nights at local theatres, excursions to local theme-parks, and national league sporting events. These benefits seem to be having some positive impact, as Pandemic was named Best Developer in both 2004 and 2005 by industry experts (Pandemic Studios, 2008b).

A company that goes even further in inspiring creativity and innovation in non-traditional ways in the workplace is Google, a global enterprise with offices 'from Bangalore to Zurich'. It is described as being 'among the best-run companies in the technology sector', and 'a model for smart innovation in challenging times' (Hammond, 2003). Some of the perks Google employees receive include all-organic food, massages, a gym and free medical care. Google's Human Resources Director Stacy Sullivan hires 100 people a week for various positions worldwide. She believes that 'passion is the quality that leads to innovation' (Gruca, 2006). In addition to the flexibility and financial security they enjoy, employees are allowed to spend one day a week on a project of their choice, and are encouraged to work on projects that will contribute to their personal growth. These projects can lead to life-changing opportunities within the company. For example, an assistant to co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin had an idea to form a 'green strategy' team. Her bosses fully supported her efforts. The flexibility for mobility enabled her to move up and she now heads the team that continually searches for ways to reduce the company's carbon footprint (money.cnn.com, 2008).

Nicole Vasquez

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Notes

1 The concepts of creativity, innovation and research and development are often used interdependently. While there is no agreement on the definition of each, there are distinctions and usages. For instance, creativity is generally considered a property of individuals; innovation is spoken of as the process of taking a creative idea and bringing it to fruition; research and development usually refers to team work within an organizational framework, such as teams developing video games or a movie. All three refer to what we have conceptualized as the 'origination' stage of creative expression.

2 In 1995, the National Endowment for the Arts in the USA stopped supporting individual artists due to a rash of controversial art.

3 In the real world, budgets are limited and policy tradeoffs must be made. It may eventually be seen as more important for a government to support performing arts centres, or indeed spend more on elementary education, on feeding the poor and homeless, or on providing more healthcare services for the elderly than on supporting artists' careers.

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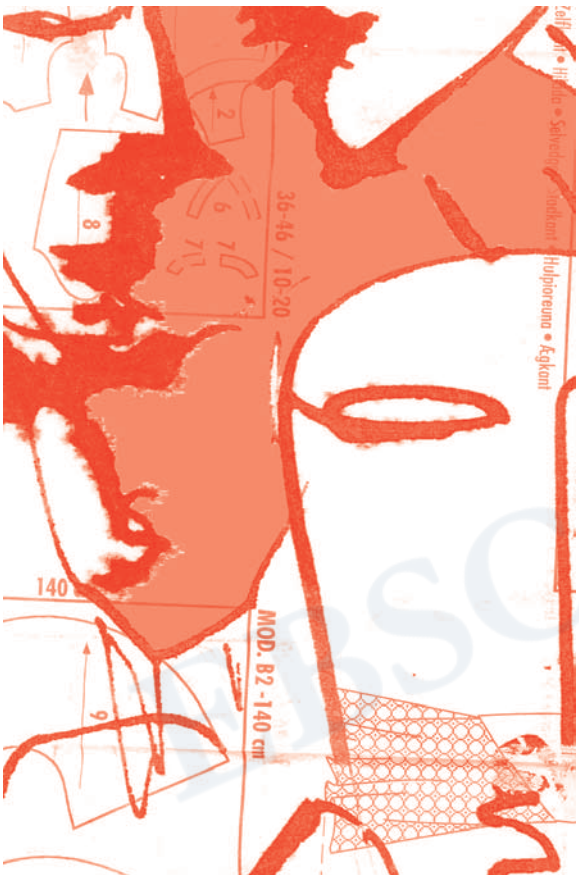
WALKING WITH THE DEVIL: ART, CULTURE AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

Gerardo Mosquera



Based on the author's practical experience as a curator, this chapter analyses problems of art and culture in the context of contemporary globalized art circuits. It explores the tensions between cultural homogenization and the countervailing efforts of new cultural subjects who are diversifying international art practice, and also discusses the new epistemological grounds for artistic discourses. The dramatic expansion in the creation and circulation of contemporary art has developed ever increasing globalized art scenes while stimulating new local energies. However, instead of a global mosaic of distinct artistic practices, what we see is the plural construction of international art and its language. Therefore, the work of many artists, more than naming, describing, analysing, expressing or building contexts, is made from these within a set of global codes.

The relationships among contemporary art, culture and internationalization have been transformed as silently as they have been dramatically in the last fifteen years. The epoch of art trends and manifestos is behind us. The key issue for contemporary art today is the tremendous expansion of its international circulation. There are approximately 200 biennials and other periodic artistic events in the world, only to mention a single aspect in the growth of art circuits. This explosion involves a vast multiplicity of new cultural and artistic actors who circulate internationally and who, previously, either did not exist or were limited to local environments.[1] For example, several Asia Pacific countries have virtually passed from traditional culture to contemporary art, jumping over modernism. To a certain degree, they have learned contemporary art through the Internet.

This revolution seems to continue in a twofold way. On the one hand, it is developing ever-increasing globalized art scenes as a result of the growth in international art networks, events, communications and global public spheres, together with the activity of emerging cultural subjects coming from all over the world. On the other hand, it will stimulate the new energy that is producing valuable art locally in areas where, for historical, economic and social reasons, one would not expect to see works that could be interesting beyond their circumstances. Most of this activity is 'local', in the sense that it is the result of the personal and subjective reactions of artists to their contexts, or because it seeks a cultural, social, or even political impact in their milieus. But these artists are frequently well-informed about other contexts, about mainstream art, or are also looking for international visibility. Sometimes they move in and out of local, regional and global spaces. Their art is rarely bonded to nationalistic modernism or to traditional languages, even when it is based on a

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vernacular culture or specific backgrounds. Contexts themselves are becoming more global through their interconnection with the world.

In 1994 I wrote a text on art in Latin America for the catalogue of *Cooked and Raw*, a huge global exhibition curated by Dan Cameron at the Reina Sofía Center in Madrid. I ended my contribution with a Galician joke my mother used to tell, in the manner of an allegory about a possible strategy for confronting the Latin American predicament – and that of the post-colonial world – in which it was placed between, on the one hand, hegemonic Western metaculture and internationalization and, on the other, the nature of singular contexts, local traditions, irregular modernities, the Non-West:

> *A peasant had to cross a bridge that was in very poor condition. He started onto it very attentively, and as he treaded warily, he said: 'God is good, the Devil is not bad; God is good, the Devil is not bad … ' The bridge squeaked and the peasant repeated the phrase, until he finally reached the other side. Then he exclaimed: 'Go to hell, both of you!' And continued on his way. (Mosquera, 1994)*

This is where the fable concluded in that old text. But something unexpected happened next: the Devil appeared to the peasant and said to him: 'Don't be afraid, I'm not resentful. I just want to make you a proposition: follow your own path, but let me accompany you, accept me, and I will open the doors of the world for you.' And the peasant, somewhat scared, but also pragmatic and ambitious, acceded. Therefore, fifteen years later, we see that Latin American art has followed its own course, but according to the strategies of the Devil, who, perhaps, is not quite so evil after all. Fortunately, the story still has a happy ending, though it is different: both the Devil and the peasant are pleased with their mutually beneficial pact, and proceed down the road together.

As a result, Latin American art has ceased to be exactly that. Instead it has become art from Latin America (Mosquera, 1996). *From*, and not so much *of*, *in* or *here*, is the key word today in the re-articulation of the increasingly permeable polarities between local and international, contextual and global, centres and peripheries, West and Non-West to which the fable referred. So let us now glance at the theoretical context of international artistic–cultural interactions (which always involve relations of power, positioning and marginality) previous to this mutation – in the Latin American perspective – and the ways in which it changed under globalization.

'Anthropophagy', transculturation, appropriation

The Brazilian modernists created the metaphor of 'anthropophagy' (de Andrade, 1928) in order to legitimate their critical, selective, and metabolizing appropriation of European artistic tendencies. This notion has been used extensively to characterize the paradoxical anti-colonial resistance of Latin American culture through its inclination to copy (only the Japanese surpass us in this), as well as to allude to its relation to the hegemonic West. The syncretic character of Latin American culture facilitates this operation, since the hegemonic cultural elements that are embraced are not completely alien, given Latin America's problematic relationship with the West and its centres. This relationship is based on identity as well as difference, owing to the specifics of the region's early colonial history – based on European settlement, the presence of important native populations that were subdued, the massive slavery of Africans, creolization and mixings. On the other hand, the metaphor goes beyond Latin America to point to a procedure that is characteristic of subaltern and post-colonial art in general.

Poet Oswald de Andrade coined the term in 1928, not as a theoretical notion but as a provocative poetic manifesto. Its emphasis on the subaltern subject's aggressiveness by means of appropriating the dominant culture is extraordinary, as well as its bold negation of a conservative, static idea of identity. Andrade even dares to affirm: 'Only interests me what is not mine' (1928), reversing the fundamentalist politics of authenticity. Contrary to Homi K. Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry', which outlines how colonialism imposes on the subordinate subjects an alien mask from which they must negotiate their resistance amid ambivalence, anthropophagy supposes attack: to voluntarily swallow the dominant culture for one's own benefit. We have to be aware that Latin American modernism had built this notion already from its post-colonial situation. This also corresponded with an early international inclination in Brazilian culture, conditioned by the modernizing impulse launched by a cultivated and cosmopolitan bourgeoisie.

Starting from its poetic beginning, the metaphor of anthropophagy was further developed by Latin

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American critics as a key characterization of the continent's cultural dynamics. On the one hand, it describes a tendency present since the initial days of European colonization; on the other, it proposes a strategy for action. It has not only survived the pugnacious modernism of its origins, it has also been impelled by poststructuralist and postmodern ideas about appropriation, resignifying and the validation of the copy, as we can see in the work of such influential scholars as Nelly Richard and Ticio Escobar. The concept was even the subject of the memorable 24th Sao Paulo Biennial, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff in 1998.

An emphasis on the resistance and affirmation of subaltern subjects is also present in the term 'transculturation', coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 to point out the bilateral exchange implicit in any acculturation.[2] Although the active role of the recipient of external elements (who selects, adapts and renews them) had been revealed already by anthropological research, the new term proposed by Ortiz introduced an ideological element: it emphasized the energy of the subaltern cultures even under extreme conditions, as in the case of the African slaves in Brazil, Cuba and Haiti. The term established a cultural reaffirmation of the dominated at the level of the word itself, as well as a cultural strategy.

In reality, all cultures are hybrid both in anthropological and – as Bhabha (1988) has pointed out – linguistic-Lacanian terms, due to a lack of unity in their signs. All cultures will feed from each other, be it from situations of domination or subordination, and cultural appropriation is not a passive phenomenon. The receivers always remodel the elements they appropriate according to their own cultural patterns (Lowie, 1940), thus these appropriations are often not 'correct.' They may be acquired, 'without an understanding of their place and meaning within the other cultural system, and receive a meaning that is absolutely distinct in the context of the receiving culture' (Bernstein, 1983–1984: 267). Receivers are usually interested in the productivity of the element seized for their own ends, not the mere reproduction of its use in its original context. Such 'incorrections' are usually at the base of the cultural efficacy of appropriation, and frequently constitute a process of originality, understood as a new creation of meaning.

If appropriation is at work in all cultural relationships, it becomes more critical under subaltern and post-colonial conditions. It has been said that peripheries, due to their location on the maps of economic, political, cultural, and symbolic power, have developed a 'culture of resignification' (Richard, 1989: 55) out of the repertoires imposed by centres. This is a transgressive strategy from positions of dependence, since it questions the canons and the authority of central paradigms. According to Nelly Richard, authoritarian and colonizing premises are in this way de-adjusted, re-elaborating meanings, 'deforming the original (and therefore, questioning the dogma of its perfection), trafficking in reproductions and de-generating versions in the parodic trance of the copy' (Richard, 1989: 55). It is not only a question of dismantling totalizations in a postmodern spirit, it also carries an anti-Eurocentric deconstruction of the self-reference of dominant models (Richard, 1991: 18) and, more generally, of all cultural models.

Nevertheless, both anthropophagy and transculturation must be qualified to break with connotations that may prove too affirmative. In the case of the first term, we need to make transparent the digestion battle that it implicitly involves: sometimes the consequences are addiction, constipation, or, even worse, diarrhoea! As Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda has warned, anthropophagy can stereotype a problematic concept of a carnavalizing identity that always processes beneficially everything that 'is not its own' (1994: 129). Although the notion refers to a 'critical swallowing', as critic Haroldo de Campos has put it, we must be alert to the difficulties of such a pre-postmodern programme, since it does not take place in a neutral territory but is subjected to a praxis that tacitly assumes the contradictions of dependency. It is also necessary to ask whether the transformations that 'cannibals' experience when incorporating the dominant culture do not subsume them into it. In addition, appropriation, when viewed from the other side, satisfies the desire of the dominant culture for a reformed, recognizable Other who possesses a difference in likeness, facilitating the relation of domain without completely breaking the difference that allows the construction of a hegemonic identity by its contrast with an 'inferior' Other. Yet this quasi-Other acts at the same time as a mirror that fractures the dominant subject's identity, rearticulating the subaltern presence in terms of their rejected otherness (Bhabha, 1984). In this sense, perhaps Latin America constitutes the perfect alterity, given its cultural kinship with the dominant West.

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If the tension of 'who swallows whom?' (Nunes, 1990) is more or less present in any intercultural relationship, it is also true that 'frequently one plagiarizes what one is ready to invent', as Ferguson has said (cited by Mercier, 1969: 170). This emphasizes the agency of the appropriating subject, through its volitional selectivity and its tactical catachrestic[3] use of the appropriated element, as Gayatri Spivak has insisted. In this direction, it is important to underline that anthropophagy and transculturation articulate discourses based in early neocolonial modernity and indirectly on anthropology; they thus diverge from similar notions in classic post-colonial theory, whose points of departure were literary criticism and the colonial situation. (Plate 3.1).

Regarding transculturation, it must be pointed out that, as Ángel Rama observed a long time ago, the notion 'does not sufficiently attend to the criteria of selectivity and those of invention', (1982: 38) and therefore it does not include the neological cultural transformations and creations that take place in response to the new, different milieus and historical situations in which cultures have to develop. For instance, to analyse cultural dynamics in the Caribbean, an emphasis has been placed on mixture and syncretism – these are no doubt crucial elements in the region. Yet the creolizing processes (what Yulian Bromlei calls ethnogenetic separation) through which displaced cultures mutate in reaction to a conflicting new space, is just as important for Caribbean ethnogenesis, and more helpful in understanding the cultural transitions now taking place on a global scale (Bromlei, 1986). As James Clifford has said, perhaps 'we are all Caribbean now in our urban archipelagoes' (1988: 173).

Syncretism and hybridization

Anthropophagy, transculturation and, in general, appropriation and resignifying are related to another group of notions that have been proposed to characterize cultural dynamics in Latin America. These notions have been stereotyped as epitomes for Latin American identity: *mestizaje* (miscegenation), syncretism and hybridization. As with appropriation, these notions respond to cultural processes taking place in the complexly diverse milieu of Latin America, with its contrasts of all types, its cultural and racial variety, its multiple, coexisting temporalities, its wishy-washy modernities. These have shown themselves to be very productive in analysing the region's culture and its routes. Still, they remain problematic as emblems for Latin America or the post-colonial world, because, in fact, there is no culture that is not hybrid. This does not mean that such notions do not possess a particular utility, since hybridization processes were especially important for the region's formation in terms of culture, race and class, under a vast span of differences, asymmetries and situations of power.

Nevertheless, one problem with all such notions based upon synthesis is that they tend to erase imbalances and conflicts. Even worse, they can be used to create the image of a fair and harmonious fusion, disguising not only differences, but also contradictions and flagrant inequalities under the myth of an integrated, omniparticipative nation, as one can see in the case of Mexico. Another difficulty is that the model of hybridization leads to conceptualizing intercultural processes through a mathematical equation, the result of which is a *tertium quid*, the consequence of the mix. These types of models obscure a cultural creation that is not necessarily the fruit of a blend, but rather an invention or a specific use of a foreign, unblended element, thus diminishing the notion of creativity as it has been presented in the editors' Introduction to this volume. On the other hand, such models tend to assume that all cultural components are open to mixing, without considering either those that do not dissolve or the resistances to hybridization because of asymmetries that remain difficult to integrate. More importantly, Wilson Harris (1973) has indicated that in all assimilations of contraries there always remains a 'void' that impedes a full synthesis, creating what Bhabha (1988) has called a 'Third Space' where cultures can face one another in their differences.

On the other hand, co-optation menaces all cultural action based on syncretism, even though the latter has been a path of resistance and an affirmation of the subaltern. The difficulty is that the fusion usually favours the central or more powerful component in an operation that simultaneously contests and re-inscribes its authority. Today, in the global and post-colonial era, syncretistic processes are defined as a basic negotiation of difference and cultural power (Gatti, 1991).[4] But these processes are turbulent: it is not possible to assume these comfortably as if they were a harmonious solution

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to post-colonial contradictions. Néstor García Canclini has pointed out that the concept of hybridization 'is not synonymous of fusion without contradictions; it rather can help to show peculiar forms of conflict generated in recent intercultural dynamics that have taken place in Latin America amid the decadence of national projects of modernization' (Canclini, 2001: 11).

Another problem is that the subordinate appropriating subjects re-inscribe the Western sovereign subject's model of illustration and modernity, without discussing either the fallacy of these centred subjects or, even more significantly, the extent to which the subordinate subjects are themselves an effect of dominant power and its discourses. This does not deny their possibility of agency; however, it is necessary to make transparent the subordinate subjects' constitution and actions, and to discuss appropriation in a more complexly ambivalent way.

Paradoxically, appropriation paradigms based on the incorporation of differences underline the polar opposition existing between hegemonic and subordinate cultures. These days a dialogical relationship seems more plausible, in which the imposed language and culture are experienced as 'own/alien', as Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) put it in his discussion of literary polyglossia.[5] Hegemonic cultural elements are not only imposed but are also assumed (Escobar, 1987), reversing the schema of power while ambivalently mutating the appropriating subject toward that which it appropriates. In this way, for example, the syncretism in the Caribbean and Brazil of African deities with Catholic saints and virgins, practised by forcibly Christianized slaves, was not only a strategy to disguise the former behind the latter: it also implied the installation of all of these at once in an inclusive, multilayered system.

Radial globalization

Beyond all these interpretations of cultural processes, a more vexing issue persists: the flux of culture cannot always remain circulating in the same 'North–South' direction, as dictated by the power structure, its circuits of diffusion, and accommodations to them. It does not matter how plausible the appropriating and transcultural strategies are; they imply a rebound effect that reproduces the same hegemonic structure, even if also contesting it. The current should also be reversed, not just to establish a 'repetition in rupture', as Spivak would say, but also to pluralize and enrich international cultural circulation. The pluralism I have in mind here is not a neutral, 'multicultural' scenario where differences remain neutralized inside various sorts of Bantustans, relativized in relation to hegemonic cultures, nor is it a stock of available, interchangeable options, ready to be consumed. The point here is to accomplish plurality as international agency via a diversity of cultural subjects who, enacting their own agendas, can diversify cultural dynamics productively and for all. Of course, this agency is limited or manipulated by the established power structures, their circuits and markets. Conversely, it can also take advantage of the latter for its own interests and ends, while also establishing the pressure for change.

Coca-Cola is perhaps the maximum symbol of so-called 'McDonaldization', that is to say, the 'homogenization-produced-by-cultural-imperialism' (Isar and Anheier, 2010: 6) which is denounced as a serious cultural problem of globalization. Yet all such expansion – like that of Buddhism in Asia, Latin in the Roman Empire, or Western culture in our global world – results in tensions that can pry open porosities and cracks. Not even Coca-Cola escapes what Isar and Anheier very poignantly call 'processes of re-pluralization (Isar and Anheier, 2010: 6)': its flavour varies according to public tastes, the water, and other factors specific to every place where it is fabricated. Furthermore, people will consume it in different ways, as much in the manner of drinking it straight and mixing it with other local drinks, as in its social and symbolic use. It so happens that Los Angeles imports Coca-Cola from Mexico – which is sweeter than the version produced in the United States – in order to satisfy its large population who are of Mexican origin. However, the possible transformations of Coca-Cola challenge but at the same time increase the global dissemination of this symbol of 'international' culture. Yet surely other nice drinks need to be globalized, for instance *chicha* (made from fermented maize), *guarapo* (cane juice), *pulque* (agave liquor), or palm wine. But if this happens, will these be as good as they are now?

The rhetoric on globalization has propagated the illusion of a transterritorial world – decentralized, omniparticipatory, engaged in multicultural dialogues, with currents flowing in all directions. The mythification of the processes of globalization and the spread of communications have led us to imagine a planet

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interconnected by a grid-like network that extends in all directions. The speed of avenues of optic fibre and satellites makes us forget the congested and polluted avenues of the megalopolis, or the critical lack of avenues and highways in a large part of the world. In reality, globalization is not as global as it appears. Or, to paraphrase George Orwell, it is far more global for some than for others. There is no doubt that the world is now much more global in economic and cultural terms, and also as regards communication. In some way or other, and to a greater or lesser extent, as Manray Hsu has indicated, we all are cosmopolitans today because 'there is no more world out there': the 'being-in-the-world' of Heidegger is coextensive to 'being-on-the-globe' (Hsu, 2004: 80). Hence the only successful major attack ever made on the world's biggest economic and military power within its territory, which used horrendous violence for an act of symbolic aggression against the icon of global trade, was organized from a remote tribal village. However, what we have in fact at planetary scale is a radial system extending from diverse centres of power of varying sizes into multiple and highly diversified economic areas. Such a structure implies the existence of large zones of silence, barely connected to one another or only indirectly, via self-decentred centres (Mosquera, 2001). On the other hand, national, ethnical and religious separatisms tend to Balkanize the globalized world, while regionalism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, frontiers, migrations and fanaticism continue to be issues as significant as they are polyhedral.

Migrations and urban explosion

The times of globalization are also those of movement. Migratory processes are redrawing ethnosocial maps within each country, especially in the most powerful, producing many heterogeneous cultural processes. What Isar and Anheier have called 'processes of time–space compression' (2010: 5) are at the forefront here. We are living in an era of 'roadrunners' that breaks down fixed identities and generates post-national subjects who find themselves in constant physical and cultural movement – which composer and singer Manu Chao has represented very well in his music and in the various personas that he embodies in his songs.[6] Many identity readjustments are taking place: multiple identities, neo-identities, masked or covered identities, mixed identities, displacements among them, 'ethnic games' (Necef, 1994) … Immigrants use not only their feet but also other parts of their bodies: a Hispanic baby is born every 30 seconds in the USA – a time bomb that has unleashed apocalyptic fears in Samuel P. Huntington (2004). Going beyond statistics and vaster than an exodus, a diasporic mentality has developed to the point of becoming an intrinsic part of a new 'global' mindset.

As striking as international migrations are the massive displacements that take place from the countryside toward urban areas in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Because of these movements, together with high birth rates, cities grow vertiginously and chaotically, while brand new ones arise and the urbanized population increases geometrically. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only 10 per cent of the planet's population lived in cities. Now, one hundred years later, half of the globe inhabits urban environments. Since 1975, the world's city-dwellers have duplicated, and they will double again from now to 2015. The chief aspect in this vertigo is that two thirds of the urban population will live in poor countries.

Obviously, cities are not prepared to afford such demographic shock. Thus, one hundred million people do not have permanent lodgings – a majority of these are children. Many more millions inhabit the improvised, precarious slums that proliferate in today's cities within contamination, insalubrity and violence. The situation seems untenable, but, as Carlos Monsiváis puts it, 'the city is built upon its systematic destruction' (1999: 15).

The cultural implications of these trends are obvious. One of the most important here is the complex, metamorphic and multilateral process that entails the substitution of the traditional rural environment with the urban situation, a clash that involves a massive amount of hugely diverse people. Much more than ever before, cities today are complex laboratories that produce heterodox urban culture, neologisms, and 'border culture', as much in places where physical borders exist as where they do not or where the border is nothing but a street. The connection between art and the city has not evolved very far as yet, but will probably indicate a main course of action for artistic practice in the near future.

'From here'

There has not been much progress in either 'South–South' or 'South–East' (so to speak, now that the

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'East' is beginning to leave the 'South') linkages, other than economic recessions. Globalization has certainly improved communications to an extraordinary extent, has dynamized and pluralized cultural circulation, and has generated a more pluralist consciousness. Yet it has done so by following the very channels delineated by the economy, thus reproducing in good measure the structures of power while perpetuating the deficit in 'horizontal' interactions. Developing 'horizontal' circuits and spaces takes on major importance in order to 'fill in', at a global level, the reticule of the 'vertical', 'North–South' radial circulation schemes traced from power centres, extending and democratizing them, while connecting the 'zones of silence'. And even more importantly – 'horizontal' networks subvert the control axes typical of the radial scheme by including a variety of new centres on a smaller scale. This whole process will contribute to pluralize and enrich culture, internationalizing it in the real sense, legitimizing it according to different criteria and to the criteria of difference fostered by the diversification of circuits, constructing new epistemes, and unfolding alternative actions. Only a multidirectional web of interactions will pluralize what we understand by 'international art', an 'international art language' and an 'international art scene', or even what is called 'contemporary' (Mosquera, 2003). These dynamics are as necessary as they are difficult, since streams usually flow to where the money is, and the colonizing mentality is more inclined to settle down comfortably in the pyjamas and slippers of complaint rather than focus their efforts on change.

Many artists from the most diverse places are reacting to and participating in all these transits. A fruitful tension results from displacements in dominant artistic canons, their transformation by different cultural values, the introduction of heterodox approaches, and the ensuing predicaments for artistic evaluation. Conditioned by the whole constellation of processes and situations sketched out above, readjustments in the equations for art, culture and internationalization are taking place today; these, in turn, contribute to the more general cultural movements. In a process full of contradictions, new generations of artists are beginning to transform the status quo. They are doing so without manifestos or conscious agendas and just by creating fresh work, by introducing new issues and meanings emerging out of their diverse experiences, and by infiltrating their differences in broader, somewhat more truly globalized art circuits. Naturally, this is not a smooth path, and many challenges and contradictions remain.

Hence the paradigm of anthropophagy and the cultural strategies of transculturation, appropriation and syncretism are increasingly being replaced by a new perspective that we could call the paradigm of 'from here'. Rather than appropriating and critically re-functionalizing the imposed international culture, transforming it in their own behalf, artists are actively making that metaculture firsthand, unfettered, deploying their own imaginaries and perspectives at a planetary scale. This epistemological transformation consists of changing from an operation of creative incorporation to one of direct international construction using a variety of subjects, experiences and cultures. The work of many contemporary artists – rather than naming, describing, analysing, expressing or building contexts – is made from their personal, historical, cultural and social contexts in international terms. The context thus ceases to be a 'closed' locus, related to a reductive concept, in order to project itself as a space from which international culture is built naturally. This culture is not articulated in the manner of a mosaic of explicit differences engaging in a dialogue within a framework that gathers and projects them. It works, largely, as a specific mode of recreating a set of codes and methodologies established hegemonicaly in the form of a global metaculture. In other words, cultural globalization tends to configure an international code multilaterally and not a multifaceted structure of differentiated cells. That codification acts as an 'English' that allows communication and this is forced, knocked about, reinvented by a diversity of new subjects that gain access to international networks undergoing outright expansion. In a similar sense, Charles Esche has mentioned a combination of sameness and non-self-conscious singularity in art today (2007: 27). Many artists work, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have said regarding 'minor literature', as one 'finding his own point of underdevelopment, his own *patois*, his own third world, his own desert' (1990: 61) within the 'major' language.

Difference is increasingly constructed through specific plural modes of creating artistic texts within a set of international idioms and practices that are transformed in the process, and not by means of representing the cultural or historical elements characteristic of particular contexts – it lies in action

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more than in representation. This inclination opens up a different perspective that negates the cliché of 'universal' art in the centres, derivative expressions in the peripheries, and the multiple, 'authentic' realm of 'otherness' in traditional culture. Obviously, these porous times of migrations, communications, transcultural chemistries and rearticulations of power have strongly confronted the centre–periphery polarity. Artists are less and less interested in showing their passports. Moreover, if they were, their gallerists would probably prevent them from stating local references that might jeopardize their global potentials. As Kobena Mercer put it, 'diversity is more visible than ever before, but the unspoken rule is that you do not make an issue of it' (1998: 43) Cultural components act more within the discourse of works than in relation to their strict visuality, even in cases in which these are based upon the vernacular. This is not to say that one cannot point to certain identifying traits of some countries or areas. What is crucial is the fact that these identities begin to manifest themselves more by their features as an artistic practice than by their use of identifying elements taken from folklore, religion, the physical environment or history. This procedure entails a praxis of art itself, insofar as art, which establishes identifiable constants, constructs cultural typology in the very process of making art. Thus there are specific art practices which are identifiable more by the manner in which they refer to ways of making their artistic texts rather than projecting their contexts.

This 'walking with the Devil' is a plausible strategy in the globalized, post-colonial, post-Cold War and pre-China-centric world of today. Naturally, it is not a matter of a path without obstacles, and many challenges and contradictions remain. More important than the fact that artists coming from every corner of the world now exhibit their work globally is the qualitative reach brought by the new situation, is how artists, critics and curators are contributing to transform the previous hegemonic, restrictive and conservative situation towards an active plurality instead of being digested by it. Pluralism can work as a prison without walls. Jorge Luis Borges once told the story about the best labyrinth – the desert's incommensurable openness, from which it is difficult to escape. Abstract or controlled pluralism, as we can witness in some biennials and other 'global' shows, can weave a labyrinth of indetermination restricting the possibility of real, active diversification.

Although art gains with the rise of artists from all over the world who circulate internationally and exercise influence, on the other hand it is simplified, since artists have to express themselves in a lingua franca that has been hegemonically constructed and established. In addition, any lingua franca before being a language of all is a language of somebody whose power has allowed them to impose it. A lingua franca makes possible intercontextual communication, but at the same time it indirectly consolidates the established structures, while the authority of the histories, values, poetics, methodologies and codes that constitute the language are incorporated. Now the active, diversified construction and re-invention of contemporary art and its international language by a multitude of subjects who operate from their different contexts, cultures, experiences, subjectivities and agendas, as pointed out above, supposes not only an appropriation of that language, but also its transformation from divergences in the convergence. Hence art language pluralizes within itself, although it has been broadly instituted by mainstream orientations. This is crucial, because to control language and representation also entails the power to control meaning (Fisher and Mosquera, 2004). Of course, such dynamics take place inside a porous strain between renovation and establishment, where the hegemonic structures show their weight.

Another difficulty is that the use and legitimation by artists worldwide of an international language set up by the Western mainstream implies a discrimination against other languages and poetics. Consequently, artistic manifestations that do not speak in the prevalent codes are excluded beyond their contexts, marginalized in ghetto circuits and markets. This exclusion is even more radical when we see that the international language of art has confiscated for itself the condition of being contemporary and of acting as a vehicle for artistic contemporaneousness. This canon thus relegates art that does not fit into it at best to the sphere of tradition, and at worst as just out of date or definitively bad. It is true that there is a lot of redundant art that does not create meaning, as with so much epigonal nationalist modernism, so many superficial derivative works and, in short, so much purely commercial art. Nonetheless, the problem remains of possibly excluding or undervaluing significant poetics that simply do not respond to the codes legitimated at the international scale. In fact, barring a

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few exceptions, curators, critics and international institutions are not aware of this problem.

The paradigms based on appropriation reproduced the situation of domination as they depended on an imposed culture: cannibals are only cannibals if they have somebody to devour. The 'from here' paradigm, while not indicating a rebellion or an emancipation, has simultaneously transformed the ping-pong of oppositions and appropriations and the alienation of the subaltern subject into a new artistic-cultural biology where this subject is inside the central production *from* the outside.

The art world has changed a lot since 1986, when the 2nd Havana Biennial held the first truly international exhibition of contemporary art, gathering 690 artists from 57 countries and pioneering the extraordinary internationalization of art that we see today. Because of the silent mutation that has taken place since then, the multiculturalist discourses and practices of the 90s, which involved policies of correctness, quotas and neo-exoticism, are no longer current, to the extent of connoting a simplistic racial, cultural and national programmatism. Until recently, a balanced national plurality was sought at shows and events. Now the problem is the opposite: curators and institutions have to respond to the contemporary global vastness. The challenge is to be able to stay up-to-date in the face of the appearance of new cultural subjects, energies and information bursting forth from all sides. It is no longer possible for a curator to work today by just following the New York–London–Germany axis (as used to be the case not so long ago) and looking down condescendingly from there. Today curators have to move around and open their eyes, ears and minds. We have not done so enough yet, but the stream continues to push us all in that direction.

So what of museums, *Kunsthalles*, alternative spaces and other institutions that deal with contemporary art? Their roles and missions have been under constant debate lately. It seems as if these institutions are finding it difficult to address the new problems brought about by the expansive cultural dynamics of these changing times. Perhaps the new situation points to a major shift in their practice, one that will take them from the prevalent space-centred routine to another, more dynamic endeavour, in which the institution will be a moving activity spread all over the globe (what I call the museum-as-hub). If museums have brought the world into their space, perhaps the moment has arrived to launch museums into the world.

Has the Devil been useful? Or have we sold our souls? Whatever the answer may be, art from all over the world has reached a crossover involvement thanks to the galloping expansion of the international circulation of art as well as artists' turning to fully international practices and projections. Perhaps the Devil is now us.

Notes

1 See http://universes-in-universe.de for an idea of just how diverse the international art circuits are today.
2 See Fernando Ortiz (1940).
3 This adverb refers to the misuse or strained use of words, as in a mixed metaphor, occurring either in error or for rhetorical effect.
4 For a thorough discussion of the idea of syncretism regarding Brazilian religions and culture see Sérgio Figueiredo Ferreti (1995).
5 On this issue see Gerardo Mosquera (2003).
6 For example, listen to his albums *Clandestino* and *Próxima Estación: Esperanza*.

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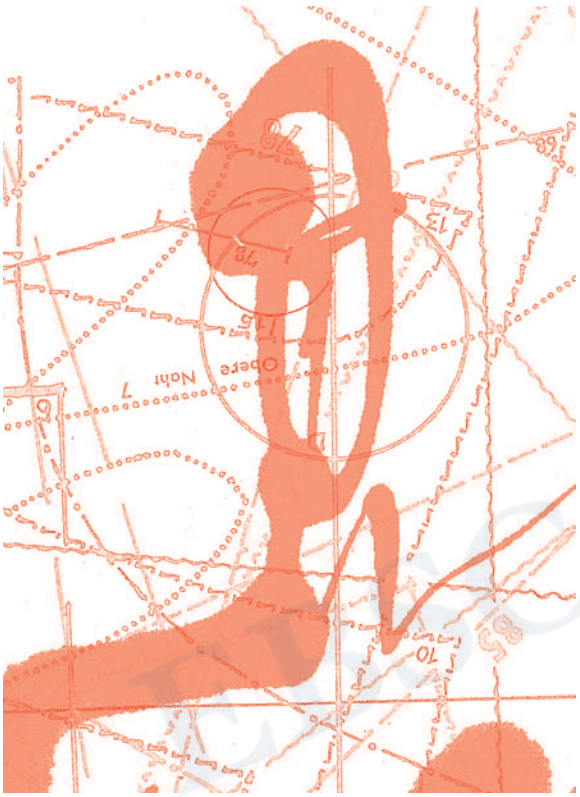
… BUT WHAT IS THE QUESTION? ART, RESEARCH AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Gilane Tawadros



What exactly do we mean when we talk about visual art as a form of knowledge production? And how does this differ from text-based forms of research and knowledge production? What new insights or investigations are made possible by the processes of making artworks (or, indeed, of making exhibitions)? What are the implications of this for the ways in which we have traditionally understood and validated knowledge produced in this way? How does globalization – and more specifically the wider global arena in which artworks are made and distributed – contribute to our understanding of visual art as a form of knowledge production? Is it possible to discern, as Isar and Anheier suggest in their Introduction to this volume, that there is 'considerable evidence to show that [processes of cultural identity politics] are occurring with renewed depth and force today'? This chapter takes specific artworks and exhibitions as its 'evidence' base for exploring these questions and investigates the role that artworks and exhibitions play in the production of knowledge in a globalized world.

> *… he reasoned that the fact that he had spent six months researching the history and culture of Benin and that he went there for work rather than leisure, set him apart from ordinary tourists. But did it really? He wondered whether the fact that the focus of his journey was research would justify the term field-trip used by anthropologists or archaeologists. If it was a field trip he was embarking on – his destination being a different culture to his own and his interest lying in the traces of history in contemporary Benin and its organisation of the past – didn't this mean that he also had to adopt anthropological or archaeological research methods and aims? He was trained in neither discipline nor did he share their systematic approach or scientific objectives. But then what were his methods? What was he after? What did he hope to find? Or was the point that he didn't actually want to find anything? That he would only try to experience the place and observe it without finding any answers? Would it be enough if he (or his work) might be able, as a result of his trip, to formulate some questions more precisely?*
>
> *(From Uriel Orlow's film* The Visitor, *part of* The Benin Project, *2007)*

The artist as researcher

In *The Visitor*, the artist Uriel Orlow regards himself, the practice of being an artist and the research that precedes the making of new work as a dispassionate, third-party observer. He reflects in the film on the role and function of the artist as researcher,

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setting out on an enquiry that may not afford any answers but rather results in the formulation of more questions. How is the research of an artist different from that of an anthropologist or archaeologist? How do the approach and objectives of an artist differ from those of a scientist embarked on a systematic enquiry? Orlow's questions to himself and to his audience probe the very nature of the artistic process and its similarity with and difference from other forms of knowledge production. Significantly, as a European artist travelling to Africa in his quest for answers, Orlow's questions are invested with particular resonances and meanings deriving from the history of Western colonialism and exploitation of the continent and its assets and, in particular, its cultural assets in the case of Benin and its celebrated 'Benin Bronzes'. Orlow's enquiry, then, is facilitated by the ease of modern modes of international travel but is embedded in historical processes and events which mark the early beginnings of the era of globalization and its attendant 'movement of objects ... meaning ... and people across regions and intercontinental space' (cf. the Introduction to this volume by Isar and Anheier, p. 5).

To Orlow's questions about the artistic process, we can bring additional ones about the specific nature of visual art and the making of artworks as a distinct practice and means of producing knowledge. What exactly do we mean when we talk about visual art as a form of knowledge production? And how does this differ from text-based forms of research and knowledge production? What new insights or investigations are made possible by the processes of making artworks (or, indeed, of making exhibitions) in an increasingly globalized world? What are the implications of this for the ways in which we have traditionally understood and validated knowledge produced in these ways? Finally, is it possible to develop a shared vocabulary and language for talking about the unique non-verbal insights that the visual arts offer as a primary process of research and investigation, rather than as secondary objects which have long been used to validate and exemplify written discourses across a variety of academic subject areas? (Plate 4.1 and 4.2).

The limits of language

Orlow's *Benin Project* also raises questions about the relationship between visual and linguistic forms of articulation, suggesting that the visual is a more open-ended and fluid domain than that of the linguistic which tends to frame and define the visual like a butterfly caught by a collector and fixed on the end of a pin, frozen and immobile. But how then can we understand or describe this space which is beyond text? Where is this non-textual space located and what exists in this apparent no-man's land of the unwritten, the non-verbal, and the unspoken? Perhaps one way into this space is to think about it in terms of translation – translation from one culture to another, or from one language to another. In most cases, the process of translation involves moving from the familiar, the homely, the comfortable to the unfamiliar, the unhomely, the uncomfortable. And in the process of moving from one to another, occasionally something may get lost but equally something may get added.

This is precisely the terrain that the artist Shen Yuan explores in her installations. In *Perdre sa Salive* or *Wasting One's Spittle* (1994), the artist fabricated a series of frozen, wine-coloured tongues from ice and suspended them over metal spittoons. As the ice melts, it fills the spittoon with water drop by drop, first of all revealing a glint of metal and then, over a period of time, the sharp and pointed blade of a kitchen knife. This installation, composed of frozen tongues, kitchen knives and metal spittoons, like many of Shen Yuan's works, is concerned with the transformation of images and objects from one state to another. 'To lose one's spittle' is a Chinese expression that suggests a state of being excessively modest or submissive, but here the unassuming image of drooling tongues dissolves itself into a spectacle of sharpened knives. (Plate 4.3). However, *Wasting One's Spittle* is also concerned with the limits of language: the cul-de-sac of clichéd proverbial sayings; the inability of words to approximate to the visual image and the inadequacy of translations from one language or culture to another. Shen Yuan's work also reveals something about the limits of globalization, challenging the idea that everything can be translated and consumed in our new global age, unrestrained by the boundaries of time, space or cultural difference.

The French title of the work, *Perdre sa Salive*, introduces another colloquial meaning to the work – that of wasting one's breath – which becomes knitted into the increasingly complex fabric of the piece and its multiple meanings, translations and interpretations. The artist herself talks about the work in

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terms of the excess of language, of when words spill over to such an extent that they become meaningless and language loses its ability to communicate. *Wasting One's Spittle*, as with other of Shen Yuan's works, reflects on the relationship between the visual and the linguistic; it also reflects on the limits of the linguistic or verbal to describe or communicate adequately our lived experiences. Shen Yuan's works may be seen to address what Sarat Maharaj (2004) calls the 'leftovers of translation'; in other words, all the things that are left unsaid or all the nuances of language that inevitably remain untranslated. For Maharaj, works like James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass – The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Batchelors, Even* (1911–1923) and *The Green Box* provide tools for thinking about the difficulties of translation and the limits of language. As he says (2004: 193):

> *What does it mean to be in the experience of the untranslatable? ... [My] reflections through Joyce and Duchamp strengthened the idea that although certain things can be translated in the domain of the linguistic, culture is far more than simply language and words. This produced in me a deep sense of the limits of words and language as the exclusive model through which we might think about cultural life and the translation of our everyday experience. With Joyce and Duchamp, there emerged, it seems to me, a notion of translation which activates both the visual and the sonic. Beyond the* sense *of the word and image are sounds which cannot entirely be decoded or deciphered as meaning this, that or the other … the penumbra of the untranslatable that shadow and smudge language and for which we have to venture beyond language – became an increasingly important area of interest in my thinking about cultural translation.*

The space of difference

The illuminated books of the artist Hamad Butt are books without words. The circle of books that makes up a part of his installation *Transmission* (1990) is drenched in a violet light that floods the space, while each individual tome, made from glass, carries its own electric charge. It is, as Sarat Maharaj describes it, 'a whirling, wordless, circuit'. Accompanying Butt's circuitous electric books – the other part of the installation – is a video work. The source for Butt's video is a drawing of a triffid on an early Penguin edition of John Wyndham's science fiction novel *The Day of the Triffids*, first published in 1951. Possibly the 'outcome of a series of ingenious biological meddlings' and cultivated on an industrial scale in order to extract its valuable oil, the triffids were tall, large-rooted plants whose venomous sting could blind victims and feed on their decomposing human flesh. When the majority of people on earth are blinded as a result of witnessing an extraordinary comet display, the triffids are in a position to take over the planet. Interestingly, in this context, it is by disabling the faculty of human beings to see and to apprehend the world visually that, according to Wyndham, their future survival is threatened. For Butt, the triffid was a metaphor for a contemporary and equally deadly epidemic that was capable of generating as much fear as Wyndham's toxic, walking plants. He was interested in exploring what he described as the 'apprehension of the Triffids of the day' and the response to its present-day equivalent. Butt's video isolates the outline of the triffid and animates it through a spectrum of shifting colours, electrifying and magnifying its movements. Seen like this, the triffid mutates into an object of beauty as well as an object of fear.

The triffid embodied many of Butt's preoccupations as an artist – the intersection of art and science, the arcane (alchemy) and the popular (science fiction), sexuality and death. These themes permeate Butt's works, invoking the precariousness of human existence and the settled sense of security which is shattered so abruptly by the coming of the triffids in Wyndham's fiction and by AIDS in the contemporary world. Hamad Butt's works explore the tension between two different forms of knowledge – the rational and apparently 'objective' realm of scientific discourse on the one hand, and the realm of the irrational, the emotional and the fictional on the other. As he writes, 'Scientific discourse, amongst others, has an inherent faith in the *transparency* of language, a *purity of intentions* we might call *communication*, that operates outside the spectrum of *gripped* truth' (1996: 36). In *Transmission*, these different realms converge and collide so that the rational becomes entangled with the irrational and the real becomes intermeshed with the fictional.

What is striking about Hamad Butt's works in this context is the process of translation and movement between what is solid, concrete and material, and that which is not solid, immediately visible or open to being grasped and held. This is not only the

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space of difference but also the space of the artwork. It is the space that needs to be negotiated but is never entirely translatable. It is a space in which the subtle shifts and changes of a culture and society may be registered but not always tangibly or concretely. Stuart Hall has eloquently described this dynamic relationship between the artwork and the world (2005: 19):

> *Despite the sophistication of our scholarly and critical apparatus in art criticism, history and theory, we are still not that far advanced in finding ways of thinking about the relationship between the [art]work and the world. We either make the connection too brutal and abrupt, destroying that necessary displacement in which* the work *of making art takes place. Or we protect the work from what Edward Said calls its necessary 'worldliness', projecting it into either a pure political space where conviction – political will – is all, or into an inviolate aesthetic space, where only critics, curators, dealers, and connoisseurs are permitted to play. The problem is rather like that of thinking the relationship between the dream and its materials in waking life. We know there* is *a connection there. But we also know that the two continents cannot be lined up and their correspondences read off directly against one another. Between the work and the world, as between the psychic and the social, the bar of the historical unconscious has fallen. The effect of the unseen 'work' which takes place out of consciousness in relationship to deep currents of change whose long-term effects on what can be produced are, literally, tidal, is thereafter always a delicate matter of* re-presentation *and* translation*, with all the lapses, elisions, incompleteness of meaning and incommensurability of political goals that these terms imply. What Freud called 'the dream-work' – in his lexicon, the tropes of displacement, substitution and condensation – is what enables the materials of the one to be reworked or translated into the forms of the other, and is what enables the latter to 'say more' or 'go beyond' the willed consciousness of the individual artist. For those who work in the displaced zone of the cultural, the world has somehow to become a text, an image, before it can be 'read'.*

Avoiding the easy commensurability of a global culture which celebrates the erosion of the world and the dream, of definitive boundaries between the self and other, the work of artists like Shen Yuan and Hamad Butt seems to insist on a space of difference which is difficult, slow and uncomfortable. (Plate 4.4).

The untranslatable

In 1998, I began working with two artists – Zineb Sedira and Jananne el-Ani – and another curator, David A. Bailey, on an exhibition exploring the ways in which contemporary artists were deploying the veil in their practice. The two artists who initiated the project had themselves been making work that used the veil as a visual motif and also explored the idea of veiling more broadly as a metaphor. The project took a number of years to research and to realize as an exhibition and an accompanying publication that included essays by Leila Ahmed, Jananne el-Ani, Zineb Sedira, Ahdaf Soueif, Alison Donnell and Hamid Naficy. It eventually came to fruition in 2003, opening at the New Art Gallery, Walsall. In the intervening period – from concept to realization – a great deal had happened in the world, not least 9/11 and the subsequent, immense political and social ramifications of the seismic events of that day. Not surprisingly, the *Veil* exhibition became caught up in the political aftermath. No venue in London or New York would entertain the idea of showing the exhibition. In Walsall, the exhibition and in particular the works of the AES group were censored by the local authority who control the gallery, on the grounds that they might be seen as 'unpatriotic' on the eve of the invasion of Iraq by British and American forces. The AES group's images ended up on the front pages of the local newspaper in full colour, the exhibition became a talking point in pubs and cafes throughout Walsall and 35,000 people came to see it. Many people saw the exhibition as being in some way prescient or prophetic of future events and debates about political Islam, religious difference, the veil and veiling within public and political discourse. Rather than being prophetic, however, I would argue that the process of researching, making artworks and curating the exhibition was a way of 'reading' the world through the prism of the visual. As a consequence, the exhibition and the artworks in it invoked the untranslatable, the 'resistant remainder' as Stuart Hall calls it – that which is not said, not represented, that which, up to that point has 'escape[d] representation' (2005: 19).

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It is not only present and current events that can be 'read' through the process of making artworks and exhibitions. It is equally possible to 'read' or investigate the past, taking soundings of what lies beneath the surface, mapping the terrain that stretches beyond reach, that is not immediately visible or tangible, or has been overlooked. This is what Uriel Orlow does so effectively in *The Benin Project* (2007). Through the interplay of the discrete but inter-related elements that make up the work, Orlow explores the neglected narratives and contexts that surround the so-called 'Benin Bronzes' and raises questions about ownership, identity and belonging that encompass contemporary political and social realities beyond these particular artefacts. Most importantly, perhaps, Orlow proposes a route for negotiating geographical space and historical time which avoids the traditional linear, progressive trajectory of Western scientific and historical thought and instead maps out a spiral trail that moves from the past to the present and back again, from one physical location to another, retracing some steps but also defining new ones that open up fresh and unexpected vistas.

But what is the question?

In Douglas Adams' comic science fiction novel *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), mice – the super-intelligent, pan-dimensional species of the universe – set out to find the answer to the ultimate question: what is the meaning of life, the universe and everything? They construct a gigantic computer, as big as a city, which begins to calculate the answer. It takes seven and a half million years. Finally, the computer (called Deep Thought) delivers the ultimate answer to the ultimate question: the meaning of life, the universe and everything is 42. Baffled and disappointed by the computer's response, the mice interrogate Deep Thought who suggests that they have not sufficiently considered the question. Only by thoroughly understanding the question can they find the answer they so desperately desire.

Rather than offering up answers, the process of making contemporary art involves asking questions; these can often be unexpected, difficult and uncomfortable questions. At a time when the spheres of politics and the media increasingly appear to present a consensual and homogeneous world-view (with only slightly differing cultural inflections), artists and curators working in a global context have the potential to interrupt this consensus by bringing to the surface awkward questions that disturb our ways of seeing the world. Unlike the established linear trajectory of Western scientific enquiry on which so many of our research models are based, the processes of making artworks and curatorial projects presents a radically different model of enquiry based on the proposition that, unlike science, religion, politics and many other fields of our intellectual and social lives, contemporary artistic practice is concerned with posing questions about the world around us, rather than offering up answers or solutions. Until we understand fully the questions that we are asking – in a profound, critical and self-reflexive way – we are unlikely to find the right answers.

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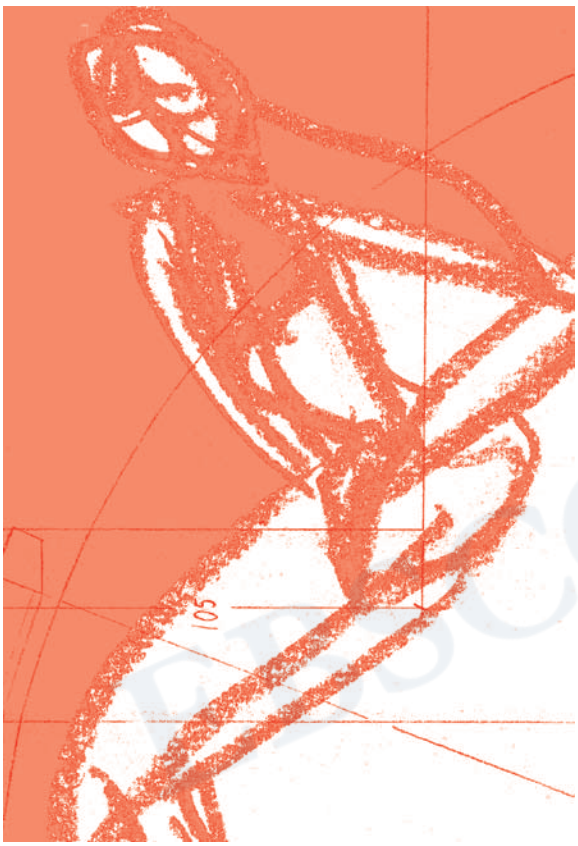
IMPROVISING IN A WORLD OF MOVEMENT: TRANSIT, TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION

Maruška Svašek



This chapter uses the concept of 'improvisation' to examine how globalizing forces stimulate cultural production, appropriation and recontextualization. It also explores to what extent these processes are controlled, welcomed or criticized by the various actors involved, and points more generally at the ethical dimensions of transnational projects. It will argue that creativity should be measured by the whole production process, exploring the active embodied engagement of cultural producers with their work in progress; it explores three projects in which Ghanaian artists – two flag makers and one contemporary artist – interacted with various individuals and groups in Northern Ireland. It deploys three key notions. 'Transit' alludes to the movement of people, objects and images across space and time; 'transition' refers to transit-related changes in the products of cultural production in terms of their meaning, value and emotional efficacy; 'transformation' concerns the dynamic ways in which people in transit relate to changing social and material environments. The perspective of 'improvisation' explores how they react to new challenges and demands, taking on contextually specific roles and identities, and gaining various degrees of ownership over the working process and its outcomes.

'[A]nthropology can best contribute to debates around creativity by challenging – rather than reproducing – the polarity between novelty and convention, or between the innovative dynamic of the present and the traditionalism of the past, that has long formed such a powerful undercurrent to the discourses of modernity' (Ingold and Hallam, 2007: 2).

Introduction

In a recent email to the Ghanaian artist George Hughes, I thanked him for his contribution to this chapter. I had asked him to produce a few paintings in reaction to an over three hundred years old West African tradition of Fante flag making, and he had emailed me pictures of the three resulting works (see Plates 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).[1] Like the flag makers Hughes was ethnically Fante, but unlike them, he was an urban Fante who had graduated from the Academy of Arts in Kumasi (which is part of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology), and had emigrated to the United States. I was interested in his appropriation of elements of the flag tradition while simultaneously pursuing his own artistic agenda. For the purpose of this chapter, I also aimed to explore the impact of George's understanding of 'creativity' on his art production, intending to look closer at the dynamics of improvisation in global arenas of connectivity. I wondered whether

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'innovation' was central to his understanding of creativity, and if so, to what extent his views had been shaped by particular globalizing forces.

In this chapter, I shall compare George's approach with the activities of two 'traditional' Fante flag makers who were invited to Belfast in 2003 to exhibit their work and make flags with various local groups. I shall examine to what extent their outlook differed from George's, and why. Which global processes have influenced *their* working procedures? Has their perspective on flag making, like George's, been informed by an urge for novelty?

In the Introduction to this volume, the editors see a close connection between the phenomenon of creativity and the drive for innovation, defining the latter as 'the process by which new ideas and artefacts lead to new cognitive and behavioural practices such as genres, ways of going and organizing, conventions, models, etc.' They ask the important question of whether globalization has promoted or hampered the formation of new hybrid cultural forms. I am equally interested in the possibilities and limits of cultural production in an era of connectivity and time–space compression, but critical of the focus on 'creativity-as-innovation'. Even though this notion of creativity has been appropriated by various people in many parts of the world, it produces a highly selective view on worldwide cultural productivity. The perspective reinforces an ideology that caters for a market hungry for 'the latest' consumption goods, and completely ignores the significance of (trans)local forms of improvisation that do not lead to novel forms and conventions.

Innovative art versus repetitive traditional craft?

George's cosmopolitan world view no doubt differed from that of the flag makers, who mostly lived and worked in small towns or rural areas mainly inhabited by Fante people. Fante flag makers receive their training through informal apprenticeships on a one-to-one basis from their fathers or other patrilineal male relatives. They are taught to work within the limits of relatively strict stylistic guidelines. Students at the Academy of Arts, by contrast, were encouraged to develop individual styles and to produce unique works of art. During their study, they became acquainted with a variety of 'isms' developed in Europe, Africa and America,[2] and began to see innovation and individuality as key ingredients of artistic creativity.

As a migrant who had moved to the United States in 2000, George had been directly[3] exposed to a much wider variety of artists, artistic styles and movements than his colleagues who had remained in Ghana, as he visited exhibitions and had direct access to museums with rich collections. Dominant discourses of contemporary art in the United States also stress the significance of artistic independence,[4] strengthening George's identification as individual art producer. In his most recent catalogue, *Gatherings*, he wrote: 'In my work I seek visual possibilities without premeditation, in order to arrive at personal truths' (Hughes, 2008: 3).

At first glance, the artist's aim for personal truths may seem far removed from Fante flag making practices. It would, however, be a mistake to create a strict dichotomy between Fante flag making – regarded as a repetitive, uncreative local convention – and the creative dynamism of the worldly artist George Hughes. The misconceptions on which the discourse of 'unchanging traditions' versus 'creative art' is based are worth unpacking.[5] As we shall see, they have been fed by ethnocentric assumptions about the superiority of 'the West' and the positive force of innovative development in urban industrialized centres.

Non-Western/rural traditions are unchanging

This idea was propagated by nineteenth-century Western evolutionists who formulated their theory in the context of empire building and colonial expansion. The theory divided mankind into distinct groups who had reached particular stages of development (see, for example, Haddon, 1894, 1895). Only the most advanced peoples were thought capable of progression, and non-Western people were imagined to be dictated by traditional rules and therefore stuck in an evolutionary limbo. The ideology justified colonialism, as the white man claimed to have reached the highest developmental stage, and consequently was destined to rule over the less developed 'primitive' races (Binkley and Darish, 1998; Errington, 1998; Price, 1989; Svašek, 2007: 19).[6] In the context of modernist ideology, the notion of tradition as a timeless category was opposed to the historical dynamism of modern times, which also created a dichotomy between 'backward rural areas' and 'progressive urban centres' (Fabian, 1983). Notions of unchanging rural or

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non-Western traditions have also been commoditized in the global tourist industry, promising a taste of 'authentic pasts'.

Non-Western/rural people are incapable of creative production

The assumption that non-Western people and rural dwellers were dictated by unchanging traditions suggested that the 'uncivilized' were thought incapable of art production, as 'innovation' was regarded a central feature of creativity (Clifford, 1988; Errington, 1998; Svašek, 2007: 16–20).[7] Even though the inherent racism of evolutionist thought has been criticized widely, and in an increasingly connected world, cultural producers outside Europe and North America have strongly influenced global artistic flows (the Bollywood industry is a clear example here), the most influential positions in European and North American fine art worlds are often still taken by white, middle-class males.

Traditional societies are determined by bounded culture

The cultural relativist position that dominated twentieth century anthropology was informed by the idea that 'traditional societies' were relatively closed systems. Anthropologists who worked in this paradigm attacked the ethnocentric assumptions of the evolutionists, replacing the quantitative notion of culture (as the possession of the civilized) by a definition of culture as a universalist people–place entity (see, for example, Boas, 1955 [1927]); Forge, 1973). According to this view, the world was divided into 'cultures' and all cultures had the ability to produce art. Broad definitions of art were used as comparative tools to objectively map and understand human behaviour. The paradigm was partly fed by the romantic wish to map 'disappearing cultures', as the societies the anthropologists studied were rapidly changing as a result of globalization and colonialism. The effects of outside influence were regarded as a form of cultural pollution (Svašek, 2007: 23).[8]

True art is the product of creative genius

Three processes were largely responsible for the idea that art should be opposed to craft, and that it should be conceptualized as a field of individual creativity and innovation. In the fifteenth century, Italian artists such as Michaelangelo moved out of the guild system to form their own studios, and their work began to be perceived as 'fine art'. Fine artists were thought to have God-given superior creative powers, making them into artistic geniuses (Kempers, 1992 [1987]; Wolff, 1981). During the late eighteenth century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant developed an influential theory of aesthetics based on the idea that 'true art' had inherent aesthetic qualities and transcendental power. In the nineteenth century, the notions of artistic genius, inherent aesthetic beauty and transcendence were linked to a belief in authenticity, stemming from a longing for aspects of pre-modern life that were associated with moral purity. Industrialization, the establishment of socio-economic classes and the transformation of the art patronage system into a critic–dealer system generated a belief amongst members of the higher classes who could afford to buy fine art, that only non-commercial, 'free' artists and knowledgeable experts could produce and recognize 'true art' (Svašek, 2007: 155–58; Zolberg, 1990).

Truly creative art is innovative

The nineteenth and twentieth century modernist belief in progress promoted the idea that innovation, as a central feature of creativity, was inherently good. Forms of cultural production that did not aim for novelty were ridiculed for being outdated and 'stuck in the past'. In the arts, 'creativity' was equalized with 'originality' and 'innovation'. In this view, 'traditions' were either 'authentic, unchanging practices' or 'boring repetitions', and copying had to be regarded as the ultimate form of non-creative conventionality (see, for example, Greenberg, 1935). 'Art' was now not only opposed to 'traditional craft', but also to 'kitsch' and repetitive art forms (Calinescu, 1987; Svašek, 2007: 161–8). This modernist perspective was partly informed by a comparative evaluation of the end products. As Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007: 3) pointed out:

> *This backwards reading, symptomatic of modernity, finds in creativity a power not so much of adjustment and response to the conditions of a world-in-formation as of liberation from the constraints of a world that is already made. It is a reading that celebrates the freedom of the human imagination – in fields of scientific and artistic behaviour – to transcend the determinations of both nature and society. In this reading, creativity is on the side not only of innovation against*

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convention, but also of the exceptional individual against the collectivity, of the present moment against the weight of the past, and of mind or intelligence against inert matter.

Improvising in transit

Arguing that creativity should not be measured by looking at end products and their degree of novelty, but rather by examining the whole production process and by exploring the active embodied engagement of cultural producers with their work in progress, Ingold and Hallam argued that 'improvisation' would be a more apt and less biased term to analyse the dynamics of cultural production.[9] In agreement with this, I shall use the term in this chapter to examine the production of Fante flags and the artistic development of George Hughes in contexts of transnational movement and interaction. I shall focus in particular on three cases. The first entails interactions between two Fante flag makers and members of Northern Irish communities; the second focuses on George Hughes and his involvement with various audiences in Ghana, the United States and Northern Ireland; and the third looks closer at George's works in response to the Fante flag tradition. All three cases are examples of cultural production and improvisation in contexts of global connectivity.

The perspective of 'improvisation' acknowledges that, even when producing an exact copy of an existing model, makers need to actively respond to the possibilities and constraints given by the context in which they work. Imagine, for example, a sculptor who has been commissioned to make a replica of one of his earlier works. The wood used for the replica may turn out to be exceptionally hard, forcing him to invent a slightly different cutting technique to produce a similar effect. Apart from the material conditions, the social conditions may have changed as well. He may be older, having lost much of his strength, forcing him to use different tools. Improvisation may also be necessary as the result of a changed political climate, for example when new rules no longer allow for the production of a particular genre, and the work has to be done in secret. In these cases, even though the end product may be a copy of the original, the maker has actively searched for new working procedures to achieve the effect he was after.

The notion of improvisation can be stretched as material products have 'social lives' beyond the production process (Appadurai, 1986). After all, people do not just produce artefacts but also buy, use and display them, and are captivated, motivated or manipulated by them (Morphy and Perkins, 2006; Svašek, 2007: 67). In this chapter I examine how people improvise creatively as they engage with material realities in different locations. I am especially interested in the influence of globalizing forces on this process, defining globalization as the highly accelerated movement of objects, images and people across regions and intercontinental space. Central to my approach[10] are the notions of transit, transition, and transformation. 'Transit' alludes to the movement of people, objects and images across space and time.[11] 'Transition' refers to transit-related changes in the *products* of cultural production, especially in terms of their meaning, value and emotional efficacy.[12] The concept of 'transformation' points at the dynamic ways in which *people* in transit relate to changing social and material environments as they find themselves in different places and historical periods. I shall use the notion of 'improvisation' to explore how they react to new challenges and demands, taking on contextually-specific roles and identities.

A number of questions are crucial. Who has the economic, social and symbolic capital to organize the transit of objects and object producers, thus enabling transition and transformation, and to what extent do the organizers control the transit-related changes? How do the meaning, value and emotional efficacy of objects in transit change, and to what extent is this process influenced by object producers, dealers, curators and members of the public? How is the result evaluated by the object producers? Which new roles and identities do object producers take on during their work abroad as they improvise in new situations, and how do they value this experience? To what extent are they forced or empowered to improvise, working in new and possibly unexpected ways? Is their outlook informed by culturally-specific discourses of repetition or innovation, and if so, how do their conceptions combine with the expectations of the organizers?

Fante flags in Northern Ireland

The first case I shall focus on concerns the production of Fante flags in Ghana, and the visit of two

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flag makers to Northern Ireland in October 2003.[13] To get a better view of the transition of the Fante flags and the transformation of the Fante flag makers through the project, it is necessary to take a closer look at the flag making process.

The first references to Fante flag making go back to the seventeenth century. In 1693, an English trader[14] reported that he had seen a 'white [flag] with a black man painted in the middle brandishing a scymitar' (Adler and Barnard, 1992: 11). Fante flags were (and still are) used as symbols of military *Asafo* companies that are formed by male members of patrilineal descent groups.[15] Ellis (1887: 278) observed in the nineteenth century that

> *[t]he companies are under the direct command of the captains, whose office is hereditary, and the captains owe direct allegiance to the chide of their district. Each town, with its dependent villages, has some five or six companies, the members of which reside in distinct quarters of the town, or in special villages. Each company has its own designation.*[16]

Asafo companies have marked their identity through the production and use of colourful flags (*frankaa*) that are normally kept in sacred shrines (*posuban*). After the completion of a flag by the flag maker, a libation is poured over it, which allows patrilineal ancestral spirits to enter. This transforms newly produced flags into seats of ancestral force, empowering them with *tumwum* (spiritual power).

Despite the loss of much of their military power after the colonization of the Gold Coast by the British and the independence of Ghana in 1957, *Asafo* companies have continued to exist, mainly having a social function. Individual companies control certain parts of Fante towns. During celebrations, flag dancers choose flags out of the collection kept in the shrine, and dance and parade with them, followed by other members of the company. The latter will sing abusive songs, ridiculing rival *Asafo* groups. The participants of the ritual performance frequently cross the territorial boundaries of other companies, angering their rivals. In the past, such confrontations would frequently end in bloodshed (Sarbah, 1968). The danced flags contain challenging messages, visualizing well known proverbs that mock their opponents. One of the flags in the Belfast exhibition, for example, pictured the proverb 'When the cat is dead the rats will take over', depicting a dead cat (the rival company) and rats (symbolizing the company) running over the dead cat's company shrine (see Plate 5.4).[17] The derogatory message, combined with the flag's spiritual and performative power, makes the flag an effective emotional agent.

To regard the Fante flag tradition as an unchanging custom, however, would be missing the point completely. Flag iconography has always responded to historical change. Intrigued by European military and naval imagery, flag makers began, for example, including European-type heraldic figures and the symbol of the Union Jack in their flag designs.[18] The *Asafo* companies also adopted certain European military practices[19] and related imagery began to appear on the flags. To understand these changes as a form of cultural pollution of authentic Fante culture would deny the active agency of the Fante, and ignore their ability to improvise in situations of economic and political change.[20]

Technological change, such as the introduction of photography, has also altered working procedures. Akwesi Asemtsim and Baba Issaka, the two flag makers who were invited to Belfast, explained to me that they would normally show photographs of flags to their Fante clients, who would look through them and choose a design. They said they sometimes made suggestions if their client was not sure, or made slight alterations to existing designs. They also improvised in reaction to the availability of particular colours and types of cotton material in the local textile market. To produce copies of existing flag imagery they used templates – paper cuttings of specific figures. If they wanted to create radically new designs, they had to ask permission from the *Tufohen*, the highest authority within the company. When I asked them if they didn't get bored repeating the same imagery, they laughed and said there was enough variety within the genre. 'Innovation' or 'personal expression', the aims expressed by the artist George Hughes in his art catalogue (see above), were clearly not what they were after. They said they aimed to produce flags that were *ayefie* ('beautiful'), but more importantly, that had the potential to be spiritually powerful and serve the expected function within the context of *Asafo* company practices. Both flag makers emphasized that the *tumwum* (spiritual efficacy) of a flag was much more important than its visual attraction or degree of novelty.

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Transit, transition and transformation in Belfast

In 2003, the art historian Shan McAnena, curator of the Naughton Art Gallery at Queen's University Belfast, travelled to Ghana, and with the help of a middleman invited Akwesi and Baba to produce copies of existing flags, to be displayed at the exhibition *Talking in Colour: African Flags of the Fante*. Coming to Belfast, they brought the commissioned flags with them and stayed for a period of three weeks. The event was paid for by the gallery, which is part of and sponsored by Queen's University Belfast. The transit of objects, object makers and project managers between Ghana and Northern Ireland, and subsequent processes of transition and transformation, were key elements in the project.

Transition was inherent as the value, meaning and emotional efficacy of the flags changed when they were moved across national boundaries into the new social and spatial setting of the art gallery. The objects were recontextualized as static works on display, even though the accompanying texts and a video in the gallery corner[21] referred to the ritual meaning of the flag tradition and their use within the context of the *Asafo* companies. Yet, in line with dominant gallery practices, the flags were primarily exhibited to be *looked at*, not to be proud of, feared, or danced with. Not surprisingly, local spectators mostly admired the flags for their visual vibrancy.

I asked Akwesi and Baba whether they were concerned that sacred objects, normally kept within shrines, were on public display. They assured me that the exhibits had no spiritual power, as they had not gone through the libation ritual. Regarded as makers of objects that were largely admired for their beauty, the flag makers' position was redefined in the new setting. The exhibition put the spotlight on their skills and ability to make visually attractive artefacts. The aesthetic quality of the flags had been 'recognized' by a curator who had the power to spend money on the production and transportation of objects. During interviews, the opening celebration and various photo shots, Akwesi and Baba seemed comfortable (and slightly amused) with their new contextual identity as 'African artists'.

Akwesi and Baba were also paid to participate in a number of community activities in which they produced flags with a number of local groups, including secondary school classes, the residents of old people's homes, a group of Irish Travellers, women from the Northern Irish Patchwork Guild, people with learning difficulties, and others. The official aim was 'to make flags that [embodied] the spirit of the particular association' (McAnena, 2003: 10). Before the arrival of the flag makers in Belfast, the gallery had contacted numerous communities, which was in line with Queen's University's outreach policy. The aim to make museums more eventful and interactive, stimulating dialogue with the general public, is itself part of a global trend, critical of more authoritative modes of exhibition making (Clifford, 1991; Kuo Wei Tchen, 1992; Peers and Brown, 2003; Myers, 2002: 256).

The community part of the project was mainly controlled by employees from the Naughton Art Gallery and the various community workers involved. The series of community events served specific social, educational and political goals, most of all defined by the teachers and social workers. Each time, the position of the flag makers was slightly redefined. During a session with some secondary school children, for example, the teacher framed the event as an opportunity to learn something from the 'Ghanaian guests' who would 'show their culture'. In return, he said, the flag makers could learn something 'about our culture'. The school was an integrated school, and in the context of the Northern Irish post-conflict situation, it aimed to stimulate peaceful relations between children from Catholic and Protestant communities. Talking about the importance of communication between different communities, he linked the flag project to the official educational aims of the school. Unknowingly, the flag makers, who had little knowledge of local Northern Irish politics, were transformed into agents of reconciliation. They did, however, clearly influence the appearance of the end product, as their technical knowledge of flag making and their idea of what was essential to the genre's style were crucial.

Akwesi and Baba improvised while working on the community flags, as the production process differed in many ways to how they worked at home. Meeting the community groups in various social and spatial settings (classrooms, spaces in community centres, old people's homes and other locations), they entered as outsiders and were never completely sure of what to expect. In transit, their bodies had become 'foreign', and needed introduction by personnel from the Naughton Art Gallery. This situation differed radically from being in their

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own studios, where they were in control as they received and communicated with their customers. Baba and Akwesi clearly had to negotiate their place in each event. In some settings, this was relatively easy. In a classroom, for example, the interaction was highly structured and they recognized the rules of educational practice. In other sites, the procedures were more chaotic (Svašek, 2007: 210–13). Their role partly depended on the interests, aims and skills of the people they encountered. The ladies from the Northern Irish Patchwork Guild, for example, had brought samples of their own work. The flag makers looked with interest at the techniques used by the women, who, in turn, admired the Fante flags for the obvious skill with which they were made. During this meeting, the flag makers acted as individual craftsmen communicating with fellow craftswomen. At the integrated school, by contrast, they acted as educators and symbols of a 'different culture'.

Improvisation was, of course, also necessary on the side of the project organizers and the participants. The final products were the result of complex processes of intercultural translation, in which the participants actively appropriated Fante signifiers, adding their own meaning to existing images and including new ones.

Appropriating *Shramantin*

I was directly involved in the production of a flag for the School of Anthropological Studies at Queen's University Belfast. The process of decision making clearly demonstrated that intercultural translation and improvisation were central to the working procedure. Baba and Akwesi were introduced to us by an employee of the Naughton Art Gallery, we were then presented with a brief account of the significance of the flag tradition in Ghana, and were shown one of the flags as an example. I had brought the book *Asafo! African Flags of the Fante*, by Peter Adler and Nicholas Barnard (1992), to find inspiration for our flag design. Having followed the project for a week, I already knew that 'Size doesn't matter when the antelope is king' was a Fante proverb used by smaller *Asafo* companies that wished to claim strength and superiority. Translating the 'small-versus-big' narrative to our local situation, I suggested we could adopt the figure of the antelope to symbolize the status of anthropology as a relatively small but important discipline within a larger academic field. The flag makers helped us trace the figure on paper, and showed how to pin the paper form to a piece of textile and cut out the cotton animal, subsequently stitching it onto the background cloth that we had chosen earlier. As we were struggling with the technique, Baba and Akwesi gave us further assistance.

Looking at the various designs in Adler and Barnard's book, we were also attracted by what we saw as a stunning image of a long-haired female spirit who was breastfeeding two smaller beings (see Figure 5.4). According to the book, this was *Sasabansam* or *Funtum Yempa*, who symbolized the proverb 'A good spirit always looks after her young' (Adler and Barnard, 1992: 14). In the context of *Asafo* company practices, she assured the company's protection, being 'a powerful and dangerous bush spirit that protects her friends and destroys her opponents' (1992: 28–9). When I later read about Fante belief systems in a book written in 1887, I came to the conclusion that the image was more likely the goddess *Shramantin*, 'a female deity, also of monstrous size and human shape, with long pendent breasts and long hair'[22] (Ellis, 1887: 36–7). The exact name and meaning of the spirit were, however, irrelevant to us. Brainstorming about the appearance of our flag, we looked for signifiers that could be translated into something that symbolized our own aims and predicament as the School of Anthropological Studies. We connected the 'looking after her young' element of *Shramantin* to the responsibilities we had for our students. Regarding the portrayal of our students as suckling babies as inappropriate, we decided to replace them for a globe in the figure's belly, referring to our belief that knowledge about the world is always embodied. When I later asked one of the participants to provide a written statement about 'our goddess', she sent me the following text:

> *The world has been swallowed as a symbol of internalizing knowledge about people and places through human understanding. When we are born, we also come into the womb of a world that is pre-formed and births us socially. Socialization naturalizes and shapes our understanding of ourselves and others. Ideas of people, words, technologies, places and*

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cultures in the world form our being. The world resides within the woman representing the procreational capacity to continue the rebirthing of knowledge. Thus, we grasp an understanding of our social selves through revealing and concealing our rules of engagement, our systems of interaction and our processes of communication.

The above makes clear that we had radically reinterpreted and changed the original figure, turning it into a signifier of issues that interested us as anthropologists. Our improvised design, however, did not make much sense to the flag makers, even though they assisted us in its making. As we were working on the figure, I knew that they would not appreciate what might have been seen by some commentators as an act of 'creative innovation'. A few days earlier, when I had discussed various flag images with Akwesi and Baba, they had stressed that they would never reproduce the image of the female goddess on their flags. As a Christian and a Muslim, they rejected the belief in the protective power of potentially evil supernatural forces, even though they did have faith in the ancestral *tumwum* of sacralized flags. The flag makers did, however, have no ethical concerns in helping us to portray our version of *Shramantin*. This was 'our flag', and they did not feel any responsibility for its content. Instead, they rather focused on its skilful production and its stylistic resemblance to the Fante flag tradition. They advised us on the use of colours, provided us with the right templates, corrected a mistake I had made when drawing the feet of the female spirit, and finished off the flag for us after the session.[23]

When I approached George Hughes to make some paintings in response to the Fante flag tradition, I also asked him to incorporate the figure of *Shramantin* in one of his works. I was interested in comparing his interpretation of the goddess with our own, and wanted to assess his willingness to represent her, as I knew that like Akwesi he was a Christian. Before analysing his visual response to the Fante flag tradition, however, I shall first discuss how discourses of 'creativity' have informed George's professional trajectory. Furthermore, I shall examine how the movement of his own works across national boundaries, and his own travels, have led to transition and transformation.

'Creativity' and the wish to escape market demands

I first met George in 1989 when he was doing his Bachelor of Arts degree in painting at the Academy of Arts in Kumasi. At the time, I was an undergraduate student in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, doing research on the development of the art market in the Gold Coast and Ghana. Part of my six months of fieldwork was spent with final year art students in Kumasi, hanging out with them, conducting interviews, photographing their works, and occasionally producing artworks myself. Having been trained as a painter at an Academy of Arts in the Netherlands prior to my anthropology study, I felt very familiar with the atmosphere in the students' studios and recognized their belief in the importance of 'creativity' and the development of 'personal styles' that would be recognizable in the competitive global market of contemporary art. Following and interacting with the art students, George struck me as an exceptionally hardworking and talented painter who was passionate about 'making it' as a professional artist. My impression was shared by George's peers and teachers, all of whom felt he was an outstanding student, being extremely productive and versatile as he experimented with different genres, techniques and styles.

In the educational setting of the art academy, 'repetition' was only encouraged as a necessary route to learning a variety of skills, and was not regarded as a creative act in itself. In the interviews I conducted with the students, their teachers and other academically trained Ghanaian artists, interviewees would often contrast their own creative output with what they saw as the repetitive and purely commercial products of the informally trained 'wayside artists', who, they argued, were extremely skilful but not very artistic'[24] (Svašek, 1990; 1997). As I argued earlier, this myth of the true artist as 'free creator, unaffected by outside forces' must be deconstructed, as art producers always operate within professional fields of power, competing for recognition, status and economic gain (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], Svašek, 2007: 88–92). Several artists whom I interviewed in Ghana indeed admitted that they had to take consumer demand into account if they wanted to earn enough to survive as painters and sculptors.

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After my return to Europe, I gradually lost touch with most of the people I had met during my Ghanaian fieldwork. However, in 2004 while I was writing *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production*, I came up with the idea of analysing the longer-term career path of an African artist. Almost instantly George came to mind, as I had known him as the perfect example of a highly motivated and creative young painter. Having lost personal contact, I googled his name, and to my pleasant surprise, landed straight on his personal website. His CV told me that he was now based in the United States, working as Assistant Professor of Painting at the School of Art at the University of Oklahoma. The same day, I sent him an email, asking him about his attempts in the past fourteen years to become a successful artist. He quickly updated me, sending me images, textual accounts, and scanned reviews of his work. Our productive virtual interaction demonstrated the impact of rapid information flows on connectivity, giving a different face to 'ethnographic fieldwork'.

When asked how he defined 'creativity', George sent me the following statement by email in 2008:

> *Creativity is the application of knowledge and/or imagination in new or unexpected ways through the ingenious combination of existing materials, ideas and actions recognizable to an informed audience. The degree of creativity can only be determined and measured by unbiased experts familiar with, and empathetic towards, the historical, cultural and professional attributes of the creator and the creative activity or object.*

His definition showed his familiarity with the dominant art historical discourses of creativity, and demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the functioning of contemporary art worlds. He stressed the importance of novelty, but also recognized the contextual nature of what may be called 'novelty-perception', namely, what is new and exciting to one person may be boring, passé or unacceptable to others. In George's case, the urge for the 'unexpected' also stemmed, I suspected, from his experience as an artist working in Ghana, when he had felt highly limited by market demands. The art market consisted mainly of expatriate and tourist buyers, most of whom were interested in images that portrayed exotic Africa. This was a complaint I had heard many times during my fieldwork in 1989/90.[25] George emailed me in 2005 that 'most of the clients wanted art that reminded them of their visit to Ghana, like souvenir-type art'. He noted further that '[o]nly few of the European clients were interested in paintings beyond the norm. I wanted to do art that was personal and that had the element of surprise. I wanted to explore new subject matter in new ways that required enough time and isolation'.

It is interesting to compare George's perception of the market limitations to that of the two flag makers. While Akwesi and Baba normally worked in response to the expectations within the setting of *Asafo* company life, they also produced Fante flags for the global market, as the flags had begun to be commoditized as 'authentic African art' in the late twentieth century.[26] Both flag makers had reacted to this trend, occasionally selling copies of existing flags to local traders who would sell them on to foreign contacts. The production of the copies for the Naughton Art Gallery was in line with this experience of global markets. The flag makers mainly regarded this new demand from abroad as an opportunity to increase their income. George, by contrast, was in two minds about the expectations of foreign buyers. On the one hand, the market for souvenirs allowed him to survive as an artist, improvising and experimenting within the limitations of the genre (depicting, for example, beach scenes with palm trees and canoes). On the other hand, the market constraints bothered him and his hope to become an internationally renowned contemporary artist, unrestricted by his 'African identity', fed his desire to leave the country. Forced to follow his works on their way abroad, he had made the decision to leave. Ironically, while his works were recontextualized as signifiers of 'traditional Africa', the artist himself had moved to escape this very image.

When comparing the two cases, it is important to note that while the flag makers' trip to Belfast had been something 'out of the ordinary', George's escape was a major professional step, informed by a strong will to present and sell creative products in the global arena of contemporary art.[27]

Being creative in 'the international art scene'

For George, emigrating to the United States proved to be a successful move. It allowed him to transform

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into the person he wanted to be: a productive artist whose work was informed by personal interests and obsessions. Employment as a drawing instructor and later as Assistant Professor of Painting at various universities was essential to his success, as it gave him the financial and social space to make experimental work and socialize with other artists, gallery owners and critics. Like many other émigré African artists George has, however, been confronted with people who expect recognizable 'African' images from him, rejecting other work as 'inauthentic'. In an interview with the American art critic Doran Ross (2001: 54) in the magazine *African Arts*, the artist reacted to demand saying that '[a]uthenticity doesn't necessarily mean that we should paint what people expect you to paint'.

In his series of paintings of old cars made in the late 1990s, any obvious references to his African background were absent. The artist does, however, not avoid African imagery. Acknowledging a wide variety of sources, he noted that '[a]s a Fanti from the Akan ethnic group of Ghana, I borrow ideas from my heritage combined with Western and Eastern cultural influence' (Hughes, 2008: 3). The work 'Mask', for example, made in 2008, shows an African woman with a painted face and a shadow that seems to be a second skin. The meaning of his 'African' subject matter is often highly ambiguous. In 'Heritage', made in the same year, a figure with a cubist face holds a gun, with the photograph of two African women stuck in the barrel. This image stems partly from his interest in 'the predicaments of humanity such as war, violence and subjugation'(ibid.).

As a contemporary artist, George aims to be recognized not only in Africa and the United States, but also in Europe and beyond. So far his work has appeared in exhibitions in Ghana, the United States, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. In each of these shows, individual paintings have been recontextualized in accordance with the theme of the exhibition and the intentions of the curators. This process of transition is part and parcel of exhibition making, allowing those in charge to compose and improvise within the context of financial, organizational and spatial constraints.

Since 2000, George has also created various art performances, each time transforming himself through theatrical acts in front of live audiences. I shall look closer at a performance George did in 2007, when I invited him to Belfast to participate in the Conference 'Migrant Art, Artefacts and Emotional Agency'. The conference coincided with the book launch of *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production*, and since George featured in that book, and I was aiming to include an artistic event in the conference, I suggested that he might come over to Belfast to give a paper about his work and possibly do a performance.

Embedded in institutional structures that stimulate interdisciplinary cooperation and work trips abroad, both George and I profited from our positions in the academic field. George managed to get some funding from his university for his trip, and I had enough funds to pay for his hotel stay and a small fee. We were both informed by our previous knowledge and experience of intercultural activities. I was familiar with performance art and had seen photo footage and film fragments of George's earlier work, and thus made preparations, such as ordering a large frame and looking for students who wanted to act as assistants in the performance. George knew what to expect from a conference setting, having spoken and written about his work on earlier occasions.

The performance 'What You Perceive is What you Conceive' turned out to be a show in which creative invention and improvisation were key elements. George pointed out in an email message to me in 2008:

> *During my performances I have to accept whatever unfolds as necessary to the overall outcome, whereas in my paintings, I can revise and edit the piece as long as I want before showing it to the audience. The performances often involve several materials, preparation and assistance beyond just paint, canvas and myself. The themes may be similar in my performances and paintings. However it is the expressive and material possibilities that differ. In my performances rather than in my paintings, I have more flexibility in terms of the number of interdisciplinary equipment and collaboration that I can include.*

In Belfast, George played with stereotypical ideas about Africans as primitive, tribal beings. He appeared on stage wearing a large wig, a golden mask and a loincloth, his body covered in blue paint (see Figure 5.5). At the start and finish of the performance he screamed loudly, ritually marking its beginning and end. Two mask-wearing assistants (one Spanish and one Italian student) held out

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small robotic dogs to the public to touch in an act of ritual inclusion. Placed on a large canvas, the robots then walked around with paint-dripping cloths tied to their tails. After a few minutes, the canvas was raised and during the remaining 20 minutes, George painted and danced on and off while music of various genres played. The end result was a large painting, showing, amongst other things, a staring eye, a butterfly shape and the word 'Belfast'. After the performance, the artist answered questions from the public, something he had not planned in advance. In a written statement emailed to me in 2008, he explained:

> *The Belfast performance was an aesthetic discourse probing the significance of the irrational in relation to myths that govern our belief systems. These cultural belief systems often determine how meaning is imputed in our everyday interaction with the environment and also with fellow human beings. The performance presented to the viewer with an encounter outside the expected everyday narrative. By borrowing from specific seemingly unrelated objects and practices of varied cultures, the performance challenges our familiar perceptual route to interpretation and also critiques the validity of the generalization of meaning and how it affects us based on our acquired conception and autonomy. The performance act therefore becomes the bridge to the unknown; to an experience familiar only by the bits and pieces of the visual puzzle, one that is capable of stretching our imagination beyond its chartered boundaries. The hybrid of discordant activities within this performance required the viewer to navigate through plausible and irrational mental flights.*

Comparing George's experience in Belfast with that of Baba and Akwesi, it is interesting to note that, while transit and transformation across national boundaries were inherent parts of George's career path, for the flag makers this was a completely new experience. George's experimentation with the unexpected was what he had aimed for. By contrast, Baba and Akwesi's interaction with the Northern Irish organizers and participants forced them to transform into roles they had not played before. It may be clear though that, in both cases, improvisation was an important part of the production process.

George and the Fante flag experiment

When in May 2008, I asked George whether he would make some works on the basis of the Fante flag tradition, he was at first hesitant, saying that whilst living in Ghana, being an urban Fante, he had had no direct experience of that tradition.[28] Ironically, he had first seen these flags outside of his home country, when he took part in an exhibition in Bristol at the Empire and Commonwealth Museum. At the time, he had 'studied their appeal to see what characteristics I could use in my work' and had 'even bought several postcards to figure out the essential compositional template, that I could borrow to advance my work'. However, that had been years ago and he was not sure whether he would be motivated by the tradition to create art works. He asked me to send him images of Fante flags so that he could see whether ' … maybe … they would ignite some inspiration'. His reply showed that his Fante background did not provide an automatic reason to partake in the project, and that, as an artist, he needed to be captured by the images. In his catalogue *Gatherings*, he alluded to the necessity of personal enchantment and obsession as a trigger of creative production: 'In my paintings I am interested in representing the way the mind works: the constant flow of intrusive thoughts that pervade my imagination. This compels me to create a hybrid of imagery carefully edited into pictorial summations' (Hughes, 2008: 3).

I sent him the catalogue of the *Talking in Colours* exhibition in Belfast and the video of Fante flag making that had been shown in the Naughton Art Gallery. I also promised to try to enthuse the editors of this book to organize an exhibition of his works as part of the book launch in New York. The latter clearly appealed to him; a solo exhibition would enable him to showcase his work and reach a new audience. He emailed in response:

> *if a museum came to me and said we would like you as a Fante of a new generation to do six large paintings using your painting style based on Fante flags, and these paintings will be exhibited in the museum space, I will do it in a heart beat. I will take it as a commission and I will do it. I do not even want to be paid for it, but I will do it because they will show it in a good space and people will see it.*

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George's positive response is not at all surprising as the transit of art works to respected exhibition venues is crucial to the development of artists' reputations, and often increases their works' meaning, value and efficacy (Svašek, 2007: 4–5). The proposed project would allow him to engage with a tradition, whilst keeping his much valued creative freedom and liberty to pursue personal obsessions, leaving space for improvisation and innovation. Emphasizing that his works would differ from the conventional flag tradition, he noted that, '[t]he audience will also see how much the Fante artist of today may have changed through education (formal and informal)'.

Due to time constraints, I could not wait for a decision about a possible exhibition,[29] and we decided to exchange our services. George agreed to produce three paintings, and I promised to write a catalogue text for him. This arrangement is a good example of how global connectivity effects cultural production and interaction, and again shows that improvisation is essential. I soon received three attachments with images of the works, entitled 'Hidden Agendas', 'Trophy Seekers' and 'Mother Earth' (see Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Explaining his working procedure, George pointed out that that he had used prepared canvases with arbitrary colours to serve as multi-coloured underpaintings, something he did normally as it allowed him 'the challenge of reconciling the discordant colours'. He had also used the same technique during his performance in Belfast.

Commenting on the choice of imagery, he wrote that he had 'tried to follow the template of the Fanti flags: the pattern margins, the lack of modeling, symmetry/asymmetry, the simplified or stylized proportions of the forms and the central placement of the single form pieces'.

When opening the attachments, I was actually quite surprised at how closely he had stayed to the Fante flag format. I had somehow expected him to visually explore the agency of the flags in the *Asafo* context, i.e., to portray them in movement as spiritually powerful and challenging performing agents. It is possible that his choice to create flag *designs* partly reflected his lack of direct experience with the *Asafo* tradition. All he had seen of the 'flags in action' were a few fragments in the video I had sent him. Following the format of the flag designs, he had started painting patterns on the edges of the canvasses, and had continued painting the central part of the picture. The arbitrary colours of the under-painting, he explained, had 'suggested certain kinds of imagery', a technique he often used. In terms of content, the resulting depictions were also related to his existing work. He pointed out that, especially in 'Hidden Agendas' and 'Trophy Seekers', 'images had been "gleaned" from relevant subject matter within [his] oeuvre'. His interest in war, violence and subjugation was easily connected to the iconography of the animosity of Fante flags, as in the examples of the-cats-versus-the-rats and the small-but-victorious-antelope (see above). In George's words, his own paintings depicted 'extraneous conflicts in life over ownership, property, deceit, etc., ending sometimes in death'. Representing the adversary, he chose subject matter that came to his mind as he was painting. The emerging depictions, showing confrontations between a 'redcoat' and a soccer player, and between lion and a rhino, were thus personal improvisations on a given theme.

Although he was a Christian, George had no moral objections to the portrayal of a female deity. This carefree attitude was in line with his earlier work. He had frequently painted sensitive images, such as erect and sperm-projecting penises, and had included semi-religious ritual elements in some of his performances. Appropriating *Shramantin*, he turned her into a signifier of fertility (see Figure 5.3). He commented in an email: 'The "Mother Earth" represents fertility in relation to procreation. The lamp signifies progress into the future and the fish symbolizes sustenance and good health. Her genitalia are replaced with the "akuaba" doll which to the Fante is a doll that brings fertility to barren women who carry and care for it'.

As with the anthropologists' version of *Shramantin*, George's goddess had lost her destructive tendencies and had been transformed into a power that was first and foremost productive. Using well-known Fante symbols such as the *akuaba* figure and the fish, it is likely that the flag makers Baba and Akwesi would have less problems understanding George's invention than grasping the ins and outs of the Northern Irish deity. What may be clear though, is that in all cases discussed in this chapter, improvisation was not only required of the producers of the works, but was also a necessary requirement for all those who tried to make sense of the ongoing events.

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Conclusion: global fields of transaction and improvisation

The initial question was how globalizing forces stimulate forms of improvisation, and to what extent these processes are controlled, welcomed or criticized by the various actors involved. The different cases showed that while improvisation can be considered a central element in cultural production in contexts of global interaction, the underlying creative aims may differ considerably, and people may have a different sense of ownership over the event. Each case showed that ethnocentric assumptions about creativity and innovation should not be taken at face value, and demonstrated the complexity of global interactions.

The discourse of creativity as the product of individuality and innovation, dominant in global fields of contemporary art, has often prioritized artists who strive for personal styles and novel forms of expression, even though relative novelty-perception influences what individual actors in the field regard as new and enchanting.[30] Artists who, like George Hughes, strive for innovation but are faced with markets interested in specific genres and repetitive styles, are obviously disadvantaged. The pressure on African artists to improvise within the constraints of a commercially successful genre, dictated by the tourist industry, can be experienced as highly frustrating. In George's case, this led to his transit to the United States, which proved to be a productive move as he managed to realize himself as a relatively successful internationally-known artist. Evidently, many Africans who have tried the same route have failed, as competition in the art world is extremely tough.

Artists like George profit from transit across regional, national and intercontinental boundaries. It is highly relevant that global connectivity has become a defining feature of communication within academic fields, and that the call for interdisciplinarity has stimulated a transnational interaction between academics and artists from different parts of the globe. Access to funding is crucial, and obviously those with more permanent or influential positions in local universities, museums and cultural institutions have a greater change to organize and shape international cultural events. As exemplified by George's performance in Belfast, the different partners may have similar ideas about the project's aims and outcomes, and both may build on an earlier experience and knowledge of particular types of transnational cultural and creative activities. Not surprisingly, this may increase their sense of ownership, as was the case with George's presence in Belfast. If, in addition, both make a financial contribution and contribute with specific social, symbolic and cultural capital, the distribution of power within the context of the unfolding event is likely to be relatively equal.

One of the partners may also, however, be unfamiliar with the setting to which he or she is invited, and feel inferior or insecure due to insufficient economic means and a lack of insider knowledge. Expected to take on new roles and identities, the invitee may get confused or feel insulted. Furthermore, products in transit or those resulting from the interaction may be (re)contextualized in offensive ways. The risk of misunderstanding must, of course, be avoided, and ethical guidelines must be followed, making sure that all partners involved are treated with respect and receive both acknowledgment and economic reward for their input in the project. This also implies that the organizers of transnational events and policy makers who finance such intentions should not use the slogan-like rhetoric of 'creative innovation' blindly, but rather, must pay attention to the different aims and working procedures of their partners.

In my view, the organizers of the *Talking in Colours* project respected Baba and Akwesi's professional views, and managed to make them feel at ease in their new working environment. Despite some confusion about their payment and sporadic complaints about the workload, they seemed happy with the arrangement. To them, the project provided an occasion to make money and increase their reputation at home as flag makers with foreign experience, whose work was appreciated outside Ghana. As the flags they exhibited in public lacked *tumwum*, and they felt no responsibility for the 'strange' innovations on the community flags, they had no major problems with the ways in which the flags and the flag making process were appropriated.

To the Northern Irish participants, re-interpreting elements of the Fante flag tradition and combining them with known symbols was a playful way of interacting with the flag makers and each other, as well as of reflecting on their group identity. To everyone involved, the project offered an experience of intercultural translation, forcing individuals to think beyond the local. Improvisation and personal interpretation were central to the process.

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Notes

1 Early records of the flag tradition can be found in reports by European traders and travellers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is, however, likely that the tradition was much older, and that it was related to the arrival of Portugese, Dutch and British ships in West Africa in the fifteenth century, which triggered Fante interest in European military flag traditions (Adler and Barnard, 1992; Labi, 2002).

2 The exposure to Western style art movements and 'isms' led to the establishment of several African 'isms', such as Ulism and Onaism in Nigeria (Adejumo, 2002: 185).

3 I make a distinction here between indirect exposure, through reproductions in books, catalogues and on the Internet, and direct exposure through face-to-face confrontations with art works, performances and artists.

4 This is generally the case, despite postmodern claims by some artists and critics that undermine notions of authenticity and artistic genius.

5 For a detailed analysis, see Svašek (2007).

6 The theory also claimed that, within Europe, some were more civilized than others. The Irish, for example, were regarded as less civilized, and men and the higher classes were thought to be higher on the evolutionary ladder that women and the lower classes (Svašek, 2007: 16, 48).

7 The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, claimed in 1884 that 'No full-blooded Negro has ever been distinguished as a man of science, a poet, or as an artist (vol. XVII: 318, quoted by Jordan and Weedon, 1995: 286), and the anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon (1894: 271–2) argued in *The Decorative Art of British New Guinea* that, although certain objects made by the natives showed 'loving, tender work' and 'infinite labour expended with observation', and in various cases 'intellects finding the crafty hands' produced results that he regarded 'with amazement and hope', further progression would only be possible 'if the white man is content to lead them onwards'.

8 Instead of acknowledging that traditions are always changing and that 'art' itself is a historically specific and changing discourse and practice, universalist definitions of art were used for comparative analysis.

9 'The difference between improvisation and innovation, then, is not that the one works within established convention while the other breaks with it, but that the former characterizes creativity by way of its process, the latter by way of its products' (Ingold and Hallam, 2007: 2).

10 I began developing this approach in my book *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production* (2007), which introduced the terms 'transit' and transition'. In the context of this chapter, I have added the concept of 'transformation', as my focus here is not only on moving objects and images, but also on moving object/image producers.

11 Transit can take place on levels of local, national and transnational interaction. In this chapter, I am particularly interested in transit across national boundaries.

12 This perspective combines my interest in processes of signification, power and emotional agency, outlined in *Anthropology, Art and Cultural Production* (Svašek, 2007). On the notion of objects as active agents, see Gell (1998).

13 See also Svašek (2007), Chapter 8.

14 He visited Christiansborg Castle after the victory of the Fante General Akwamu over the Danish.

15 The Fante have been regarded by anthropologists as a classic example of 'double descent', as they are politically organized along matrilineal ties, while their military system is organized through patrilineal affiliation (Christensen, 1954).

16 At times, new companies have been formed with some of their names referring to particular historical circumstances. One of the seven companies of Cape Coast was, for example, called *Brohfo n' kŏă*, meaning 'white man's slaves' because 'it was originally composed of men who were employed in various capacities by Europeans' (Ellis, 1887: 279). For more information on the structure and functioning of the *Asafo* companies, see Christensen, 1954; McCarthy, 1983; Meyerowitz, 1974: 87–93; Sarbah, 1968; Svašek, 2007: 196–98.

17 The latter are perceived by the Fante as highly intelligent animals, and the company that had produced the flag clearly associated themselves with them.

18 Some commentators claim that the *Asafo* companies only started using flags *after* their encounters with Europeans. Major A.B. Ellis, for example, who spent part of his working life in the Gold Coast Colony, noted that '[e]very company possess a number of drums of various sizes (…), and those of the tribes living under British rule have company flags, a custom borrowed from Europeans' (1887: 279).

19 These included marching in procession, and regimental colours, numbers, names and mottos.

20 James Christensen rightly argued that '[w]hile the influence of the European powers along the coast on the culture of the Fante cannot be dismissed, it is felt that the company system is an outgrowth of the military tradition of the Akan, and not a copy of the European military pattern' (1954: 108; see also DeGraft Johnson, 1932: 309–10).

21 This was the documentary *Fante Flags South Bank Show. Flags of the Fante Coast* produced in 1995 by Tony Knox.

22 'Her colour is white. She is never found except in or among silk-cotton trees. Like *Sasabonsum*, *Shramantin* also waylays and seizes solitary wayfarers, but she does not devour them. She keeps them for four or five months, and then returns them to their respective villages, after which they become priests and priestesses of *Shramantin*, who is believed to have taught them the mysteries of her worship. A day, said to be about the middle of July, is set apart as sacred to *Shramantin*. A sheep is sacrificed, the ground at the foot of the *bombax* [silk-cotton tree] cleared of underwood and weeds, and the tree smeared with the blood of the sacrifice' (Ellis, 1887: 36–7).

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23 I had drawn the feet in opposite directions, whereas in the design in Adler's book, the feet pointed in the same direction.
24 This category included sculptors who produced solely for the tourist market, and painters who painted portraits and advertising boards on commission.
25 Numerous researchers have identified the limiting impact of tourist demands on the creative possibilities of cultural producers in economically disadvantaged positions, although certain artisans and artists have also pushed the boundaries, creating new and successful genres and styles (Jules-Rosette, 1984; Morphy, 1995; Myers, 2002; Steiner, 1994).
26 Commoditized as 'African art' since the 1980s, Fante flags have been sold to African middlemen, to galleries in North America and Europe directly, and through the Internet (Svašek, 2007: 206–7). Feeding the desire to possess 'authentic' objects, old worn and visibly used flags are the most expensive.
27 The existence of 'contemporary art' as a global arena of interaction amongst creative and innovative individuals is, of course, itself an outcome of globalizing processes (Svašek, 2007: 116).
28 He later said in reply to one of my questions about his Fante background: 'I have no connections with the patrilineal *asafo*, and have not participated in any of the Fante flag parades'.
29 The *Cultures and Globalization* project budget is very limited, hence the organization of such an exhibition cannot be envisaged.
30 In my understanding, postmodern strategies of borrowing and pastiche also fall into this category, as artists who follow this working procedure mostly aim for an oeuvre that is personally recognizable.

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CHAPTER 6

DIASPORIC SPACES: MIGRATION, HYBRIDITY AND THE GEOCULTURAL TURN

Keith Nurse

The growth of diasporas is a key feature of contemporary globalization and represents an important geocultural shift because of the demographic and political impacts of international migration. However, its significance and potential for social change and transformation are largely unmapped. This chapter analyses the expansion and export of popular cultures from the Caribbean and Latin America to the North Atlantic using two case studies. The first is of the manner in which Latin music, particularly reggaeton, has risen to prominence and influences a Latino and worldwide youth audience. The second examines how diasporic Caribbean carnivals have become the world's most transnational festival. The author concludes by arguing that diasporic cultural expressions and practices facilitate aesthetic innovation as well as socio-political change in both receiving and sending countries.

Introduction

The intersection of globalization and diasporas in our time has led to new geo-economic, political, social and cultural spaces that link societies in the South to the North Atlantic, particularly through global cities such as New York, Miami, Toronto, London, Paris, Madrid and Amsterdam. Growing global diasporas (Cohen, 2008) and transnational identities facilitate new modes of transnational living (Guarnizo, 2003) that in effect transcend the boundaries of nation-states and hybridize cultural identities long associated with specific national cultures. As such, the concept of diasporic spaces breaks out of the confines of methodological nationalism (approaches that privilege nation-states as the bounded containers of culture) and instead embraces 'the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes' (Brah, 1996: 208). In this framework, diasporic spaces are 'inhabited, not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous' (Brah, 1996: 209).

The literature on globalization and global culture tends to focus more on the recent acceleration in the flows of technology, goods and resources and less on the movement of people (Ho and Nurse, 2005; Nurse, 2004b). It also sees global flows principally in a North-to-South or core-to-periphery direction. In this sense much of the literature on global culture does not capture the tremendous impact of migration and the growth of contemporary diasporas on the North, or what Patterson (1994: 109) calls the 'extraordinary process of periphery-induced creolization in the cosmopolis'. In effect, what Patterson is arguing is that 'culturally, the

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periphery is greatly influenced by the societies of the core, but the reverse is also the case' and as a consequence it is critical to examine the counter flow, the periphery-to-core cultural flows.

The literature on migration is dominated by the immigration concerns of the main receiving territories and at the same time erases the contribution of migration to the now developed countries. Hence my aim in this chapter is to offer a view from the periphery by focusing on the new modes of insertion of the labour-exporting societies and the impacts in terms of cultural expressions. I shall relate the migration of labour in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to global cultural change by asking what the impact is of (to coin a neologism) 'diasporization' on the export and reproduction of popular cultures in the North Atlantic. I shall explore this key question by looking specifically at the contributions of diasporic communities and cultural expressions from the Caribbean and Latin America to the societies of the North Atlantic.

The diasporic experience of the Caribbean and Latin America provides for an engaging case study since these regions are 'twice diasporized': they are both points of arrival for the immigration of peoples, both forced and voluntary, from Europe, Africa, and Asia for the last five hundred years, as well as points of departure for emigration to receiving societies in North America and Europe that began in the twentieth century (Cohen, 2008). In the context of these migratory flows, regions have developed a capacity to engage modernity and globalization creatively and politically by drawing upon indigenous and imported folk, religious and oral traditions, as a source of cultural identity while participating in the dominant global culture. Therefore, in the cultural expressions of the region, one can say that there are no pure forms and that everything is hybridized or the result of the confluence of several cultural traditions, thereby exhibiting tendencies of double consciousness (Gilroy, 1993). Diasporization is also a highly politicized process on account of the issues of race and ethnic relations (e.g., multiculturalism), especially in the context of high unemployment and slower economic growth in the major receiving economies. Geopolitical and foreign policy relations between receiving and sending countries have been heightened in the post-Cold War context and in the wake of the September 11 attack on the USA. However, while there are discontinuities in the diasporization process there are also continuities in terms of how 'imagined' and 'encountered' spaces are defined. For example, Eriksen (2007: 149) makes the point that:

> *Far from being the fragmented and alienated people one might expect migrants to be, given their ambiguous political and cultural position, they tend, broadly, to reproduce important aspects of their original culture in the new setting. This is often met with animosity in sections of the majority population, who may insist that the newcomers do their best to 'adapt' to the host society; but at the same time, this option is often closed to immigrants who face discrimination and differential treatment from the majority.*

From this perspective, the salience of diasporization to the global culture debate resides in the fact that with the movement of people has arisen the movement of cultures, particularly popular cultures and forms of expressions. Guarnizo (2003: 667) argues that these cross-border relations 'emerge, both wittingly and unwittingly, from migrant's drive to maintain and reproduce their social milieu of origin from afar'.

Latin popular music and the rise of *reggaeton*

A key area of cultural expressions that has benefited from and accelerated the diasporization process has been popular music. In recent years Latin music has experienced a rapid growth in popularity. The music market in Latin America was estimated at US $663.3 million in 2005 and music sales are dominated by three territories: Brazil, Mexico and Argentina account for over 60 per cent of the market. In the US market Latin music sales increased from $550 million in 2002 to a peak of $753 million in 2005, then declining to $464 million in 2007 on account of piracy and Internet downloading and the general downturn in regional economies (IFPI, 2008).

A key feature of the growth of Latin popular music in the USA, which is the main location for the Latin diaspora, is demographic shifts in the United States. The US's Hispanic population, the largest

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minority in the country, was estimated to be 35.3 million or 12.5 per cent of the total US population in 2000 and is forecast to double in share by 2050. Most of this population are concentrated in six states: California and Texas account for 50 per cent; New York, Florida, Illinois and Arizona share 25 per cent; and Puerto Rico has approximately 12 per cent. The Hispanic population is relatively young – half are under 24 years of age compared to 35 per cent in the non-Hispanic population (US Census Bureau, 2007). The regional geography also underscores the market shares among the various genres of Latin music. At 60 per cent of the US Latin population it is no wonder that *Tejano* and regional Mexican music accounts on average for between 50 and 60 per cent of the Latin music market. The other key genres are Latin pop/rock with 23 per cent and tropical (e.g., *merengue*) with 13 per cent. A new designation has been created recently to capture the rise of Latin urban music with 8 per cent of the market (IFPI, 2008).

Beyond demographics, the growth of Latin music can be credited to the increased popularity of art forms and genres within the diaspora and in the mainstream. Much recent growth can be attributabed to the meteoric rise of *reggaeton* music: an urban fusion of Jamaican reggae, African American hip-hop and Puerto Rican *bomba* and salsa. Accordingly, it is observed that '*reggaeton* artists don't rap their lyrics in Spanish but in *Borinquen*, a Puerto Rican Spanish Creole with a tempo similar to Jamaican patois' (Meschino, 2005: 53). Top *reggaeton* artists like Puerto Rican superstars Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, and Tego Calderon, building on the success in the 1990s of the Panamanian artist El General, have been able to break out of so-called ethnic markets to achieve worldwide appeal and sales. In recent years the Billboard Latin Music Awards have been dominated by *reggaeton* artists like Daddy Yankee who was the top seller in 2005 with his mega-hit single 'Gasolina' from the album 'Barrio Fino', which had multiple platinum awards for sales over 500,000 units in several countries, from Australia to the USA.

New genres like *reggaeton* and the impact that they have generated are part of a long history of transnational engagement by Latin American and Caribbean cultural expressions. As Quintero (2007: 91) argues:

> *Latino youth cultural expressions – salsa during the 1970s and Latin jazz, hip-hop, and* reggaeton *nowadays, all of them marked by ties to black U.S. culture … have shown on a regional, continental, and even worldwide level, the value of heterogeneity and difference. They have resisted powerful homogenizing forces and through their expression of different ways of thinking and feeling, offered the possibility of another kind of human interaction. This is the source of the worldwide popularity of their dances, in which myth, history, and daily life intertwine in polyrhythmic intimations of utopia.*

The diasporization of popular music generates new geocultural spaces that connect both the home and the receiving countries. This is the case because most of the contemporary migrants to the North are subaltern groups from peripheral economies and societies and their different cultural expressions are often racialized and marginalized first in the sending countries and later in the new host societies. For *reggaeton* the home conditions exhibited tendencies not unlike those of popular music forms from the Caribbean. Meschino notes that 'comparable to the views of many Jamaicans towards dancehall reggae, older upscale Puerto Ricans initially regarded *reggaeton* contemptuously because of its ghetto roots and gritty depiction of life in the barrio where the music existed exclusively for several years' (p. 53). Abroad, the major recording labels avoided signing *reggaeton* artists because of this image. However today, with a growth in sales, major labels like the Universal Music Group are targeting the Latino youth market through the same *reggaeton* music.

The resistance component of the popular music allows for these groups to 'talk back' to the hegemonic groups – but on their own terms. It is the popularity of these modes of cultural expression that ultimately allows for the commercialization of art forms. What this illustrates is that diasporization extends or transnationalizes the home market and creates opportunities for diasporic exports and even a potential entry into mainstream markets. In sum, the reproduction of diasporic cultural identities generates a transnational engagement by artists and cultural entrepreneurs from the sending societies or by those from the receiving countries, whether diasporic in ownership or not.

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Table 6.1 The economic impact of diasporic Caribbean carnivals

Diasporic carnivals	Attendance	Festival expenditures
Caribana, Toronto	1 million	Cnd$200 million
Labour Day, New York	3.5 million	US$300 million
Notting Hill, London	2 million	Stg£93 million

Source: Nurse, 2004a

The diasporic Caribbean carnivals

> *People carnivalling and playing marse in Brooklyn; they playing marse in Montreal, in Toronto and Miami, they playing marse in Calgary, and in Antigua, in St. Lucia, and Jamaica; they playing marse in New York and Notting Hill, moving and moving and in the moving they throwing out the seeds that defying the holding in the ships crawling across the Atlantic. (Phillip, 1998: 135)*

The term 'marse' or 'mas' is a contraction of the word masquerade. It is a word invented in the Trinidad carnival experience and used to depict a range of carnival-related activities. For example, associated terms are 'play mas' – to join a mas band; 'mas camp' – the headquarters of mas bands where costumes are made; 'pretty mas' – costumes that depict the colourful and fanciful side of life; and 'jouvay' mas – emphasizing the emancipatory side of carnival as distinct from pretty mas. The term 'mas' is even embedded in the copyright laws of Trinidad and Tobago under the title of 'works of mas'.

These masquerading traditions have been exported way beyond the shores of Trinidad to almost every major city in North America and Europe. Best estimates are that there are over 70 Caribbean-inspired carnivals that are, in large part, modelled after the one found in Trinidad. In each respective site it is the largest festival or event in terms of attendance and the generation of economic activity. For instance, Notting Hill carnival in London attracts over two million people over two days of activities and generates between £20–30 million in visitor expenditures: as such it is considered to be the largest festival of popular culture in Europe. Labour Day in New York and the Caribana festival in Toronto are similarly the largest events in the USA and Canada, respectively (see Table 6.1 above for further details). As such, the diasporic Caribbean carnivals are arguably 'the world's most popular transnational celebration' (Manning, 1990: 36).

These carnivals have grown rapidly since the early 1990s and are now the largest street festivals and generators of economic activity in their respective locations (see Table 6.1). The Notting Hill carnival, with over two million people attending in a couple of days, generates over £93 million in audience and visitor expenditures. Similarly, the Labour Day carnival in New York earns US$300 million, while the Caribana festival in Toronto generates CND$200 million.

The globalization of the Trinidad carnival is directly related to the spread and expansion of a Caribbean diaspora in the North Atlantic, especially after the Second World War, in response to the demand for cheap immigrant labour. Organized by the diasporic Caribbean communities, these diasporic carnivals have come to symbolize the quest for a 'psychic, if not physical return' to an imagined ancestral past (Nettleford, 1988: 197) and the search for a 'pan-Caribbean unity, a demonstration of the fragile but persistent belief that "All o' we is one"' (Manning, 1990: 22). In the UK alone, there are as many as 30 carnivals that fall into this category. They are held during the summer months rather than in the pre-Lenten or Shrovetide period associated with the Christian calendar. The main parade routes are generally through a city centre or within the confines of the immigrant community – the former is predominant, especially with the larger carnivals (Nurse, 1999).

Like their parents, these diasporic carnivals are hybrid in their form and influence. The Jonkonnu

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masks of Jamaica and the Bahamas are evident in many of these carnivals, thereby making them pan-Caribbean in scope. Over time the carnivals have also incorporated carnivalesque traditions from other immigrant communities: South American (e.g., Brazilian and Colombian), African and Asian. For instance, it is not uncharacteristic to see Brazilian samba drummers and dancers parading through the streets of London, Toronto or New York during Notting Hill, Caribana or Labour Day. The European populations have not only become participants, largely as spectators, but also appear increasingly as festival managers, masqueraders and steelpan players. Another development is that the art forms and celebratory traditions of the diasporic Caribbean carnivals have been borrowed, appropriated or integrated into European carnivals. Indeed, in some instances, the European carnivals have been totally transformed or 'colonized'. Examples of this are the Bradford, Barrow-in-Furness and Luton carnivals, where there is a long tradition of British carnival. One also finds a similar trend taking place in carnivals in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden, as they draw inspiration from the success of the London Notting Hill carnival (Nurse, 2004a).

Growth in the number and size of these diasporic Caribbean carnivals came in two waves. The first wave involved the consolidation of the early carnivals during the 1960s until the mid-1970s. From the mid-1970s onwards two parallel developments took place: the early carnivals expanded in size by broadening the appeal of the festival (for example, through the introduction of sound systems playing reggae or house music), and a number of smaller carnivals also emerged as satellites to the larger, older ones.

The diasporic Caribbean carnivals have developed in to a means to promote cultural identity and socio-political integration within the Caribbean diasporic community as well as with the host society. The diversity in participation suggests that these carnivals have become multicultural or poly-ethnic festivals (Cohen, 1993).

From another perspective, it has been argued that such diasporic carnivals reflect rather than contest institutionalized social hierarchies. In each of the major diasporic carnivals the festival has been represented in ways that reproduce the colonialist discourse of 'race', gender, nation and empire (Bhabha, 1994). The diasporic festival has suffered from racial and sexual stigmas and stereotypes in the media, which are based on constructions of 'otherness' and 'blackness'. This situation becomes heightened as these carnivals become larger and therefore more threatening to the prevailing order. In the early phase, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the carnivals were viewed as exotic, received little if any press coverage, and were essentially tolerated by the state authorities. From the mid-1970s, as attendance at the festivals enlarged, these became more menacing and policing such events escalated, resulting in a backlash from the immigrant Caribbean communities.

These modes of representation have come in tandem with heightened surveillance mechanisms from the state and the police. In the case of London, the expenditure by the state on the policing of a festival will be several times larger than its contribution to the staging of the festival. The politics of cultural representation has negatively affected the viability of such diasporic carnivals. Adverse publicity and racialized stigmas of violence, crime and disorder have allowed for a blockage on investment from the public and private sectors, in spite of the fact that these events have proven to be violence-free relative to other large public events or festivals.

Under increased surveillance the carnivals became more contained and controlled during the 1980s. However, by the 1990s the perspective of governments, business leaders and the media began changing when it was recognized that these were major tourist attractions and generated significant media impact and destination branding returns. In each of the major global cities the mayor would be the chosen person to officially open the festivities. Increasingly the political elites will speak of the carnivals as a mainstay and a source of pride for the relevant cities. For instance, the former Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, in the foreword to a report commissioned by the Greater London Authority in 2003, is recorded as saying that:

> *The Notting Hill Carnival is here to stay and therefore the true value of this report lies in its adoption of a long-term strategic approach to the Carnival's development as a major London event that continues to be the subject of international recognition and acclaim. (GLA, 2004: 6)*

From the mid-1990s, as one analyst puts it, the carnivals have been reduced to a few journalistic

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essentials: 'the policing and control of the crowd, the potential for violence, the weather, island images, the size of the crowd, the city economy and, most recently, the great potential benefit for the provincial tourist industry' (Gallaugher, 1995: 402).

In this respect one can argue that the socio-political and cultural conflicts based on 'race', class, gender, ethnicity, nation and empire embedded in the Trinidad carnival were transplanted to the diasporic context. In many ways these diasporic carnivals have become trapped between the negative imagery of stigmas and stereotypes, the co-optive strategies of capitalist and state organizations, and the desires of the carnivalists for official funding and validation.

For the host societies, in both North America and Europe, the diasporic Caribbean carnival allows for an open and public display of the socio-economic and politico-cultural tensions that exist between the organs of oppression (i.e., the state, police, media, church, schools) and the Caribbean population. The carnivalesque aesthetic and politics will then confront the hegemonic discourse and modes of representation as they relate to stereotypes dealing with 'race', sexual behaviour and criminal activity. At one level it has forced multiculturalism onto the agenda. In other ways, it illustrates still how little things have changed in terms of the hegemonic colonialist discourse and imperialist structures.

Conclusion

There is no denying that popular cultures have empowered diasporic communities through an expansion of geo-cultural space. The above cases (*reggaeton* and the diasporic Caribbean carnivals) illustrate the clash of social interests, the proverbial struggle between popular forces and the power-bloc. What they also illustrate is that such antagonisms and contestations propel creativity and innovation in the popular art forms. It can be observed that as a particular art form or genre becomes captive to the market or excluded from some space the popular culture morphs into new forms or establishes new arenas for engagement. In short, it can be argued that popular cultures have a life cycle of artistic creation, identity formation, commodification and re-creation.

Diasporic cultures, often embodied in popular cultures, employ an 'aesthetic of resistance' that confronts and subverts hegemonic modes of representation and thus acts as a counter-hegemonic tradition to the geocultural constructions embodied in notions of empire, nation, class, 'race', gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (Shohat and Stam, 1994). It is on this basis that Powell (2002: 15) argues that:

> *Black diasporal cultures are characterized by forms that are not only alternative to mainstream counterparts, but proactive and aggressive in their desire to articulate, testify, and bear witness to that cultural difference.*

What is described here is the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of aesthetics (Cohen, 1993). As such popular culture is one of the most accurate representations of the modern condition as it allows for the unmasking of hidden transcripts and agendas (Scott, 1990).

The popular cultures analysed in this chapter are an expression of what Stuart Hall (1997) calls the 'redemptive move' associated with most diasporic cultures that are 'born of traveling, rupture, appropriation, loss, exile'. Hall also makes the point that popular cultures are always contested because they operate in a contradictory space of resistance and incorporation, social protest and commercialization (Hall, 1992).

In this sense, the popular cultures of the diaspora are not just an aesthetic and commercial space where artistic expressions and psychic and bodily pleasures are enacted, represented and marketed. It is also an arena where social values and meaning are put on public display and negotiated. From this standpoint popular cultures are liberatory and emancipatory, not in the sense of outright victory but in the sense of facilitating dialogue and discourse between groups as well as within groups. This is why Hall (1992) encourages us to move away from the 'essentializing of difference' through the construction of simple binary oppositions, to focus on 'cultural positionality' where the emphasis is on appreciating the 'dialogic strategies and hybrid forms essential to the diaspora aesthetic' (1992: 29).

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Proxy servers: contemporary art practices in service economies

The service, or so-called hospitality, industries are among the fastest growing in the global economy. For example, in the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2005 more than 130,000 people from Eastern Europe registered to work, most of them in hospitality, catering, and so on. These figures reflect only those persons who are legally documented, but they are also indicative of the areas where unregistered workers will find casual employment. Migrant workers, both legal and illegal, are most often employed in service industries regardless of their professional qualifications or skills acquired in their home countries. In this context, it is possible to consider international artists as transient labourers, as they create new work for biennials and exhibitions on opposite sides of the world. In 1994, Andrea Fraser proposed the phrase 'artistic service provision' as a descriptor of these practices.[1]

Today these kinds of projects, in which the artwork itself is produced and consumed at the same time, are even more prevalent. One of the myths of avant-garde aesthetic practice is the illusion that artists freely determinine their practice, producing what they want, where they want — in other words, *for their own interests*. In artistic service provision the production of 'prestige value' is replaced with 'social use value'. However, even if we subscribe to the fantasy of artists as self-employed agents, they are not employed to serve either themselves or their own interests. When the artist seeks to challenge dominant ideological paradigms, the motivating interests of art institutions, current political agendas and market forces exercise a determining influence on the dissemination and reception of their work. Service labourers do not consume the services they provide.

These services are increasingly associated with the struggles of cultural or ethnic others. Embracing the social use value of art does not necessarily free artists from exploitation. In fact, they are increasingly invited to create work precisely because of their perceived interests as social subjects. It is these interests which make it appropriate for artists to be dispatched to address the needs of particular communities, such as migrants. Through public funding policies, museum outreach initiatives, community regeneration strategies, and so on, contemporary art is being instrumentally applied.

Although many 'socially and politically engaged' artists now employ ethnographic techniques, their own agency as labourers has much in common with the dilemmas of migrant service workers.[2] Their services may draw attention to hegemonic systems of exchange, but do the terms of their participation help sustain the very system that they critique?

In the globalized art market, establishing oneself as an 'international artist' has become synonymous with migrant working practices. While many artists continue to exhibit existing works, a key part of international practice includes participation in biennials and art fairs where they are frequently asked to respond to a specific theme or brief which, more often than not, means responding to local conditions.

Of course, art can and does activate communities socially, politically, intellectually and aesthetically, within and in spite of hegemonic systems of control. The global distribution of creative labour, and how we evaluate its 'service' to society, also produce the conditions for our politics. But does the interest in as well as the interests of artist practices transform the demands of social and political agendas, if not transcend the vested interests of the market?

Cylena Simonds

Notes for Box 6.1

1 Fraser, A. (n.d.) 'How to provide an artistic service: an introduction', *Engaging Infrastructure, Drawing oN Air (dna)* website, available at http://adaweb.com

2 For more on the use of ethnographic strategies in contemporary art see Foster, H. (1996) 'The artist as ethnographer', in *The Return of the Real*, MIT Press

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CREATIVITY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Jason Toynbee

Copyright, the main form of intellectual property in cultural production, has played a key part in globalization. Although it is presented as an unalloyed good by its powerful defenders in corporations and states, this chapter argues to the contrary that copyright is of dubious value. In fact the expansive copyright regime which characterizes the present era threatens vulnerable cultures – both traditional and hybrid – around the world. The argument is made by refuting the conventional rationales for copyright, both economic and aesthetic. Supporting evidence is then drawn from the cases of music making in Jamaica, and the Bollywood film industry in India. Each, in a perhaps surprising parallel, suggests that creative cultures can flourish in, and may even depend upon, the absence of effective copyright.

Introduction

Copyright performs a central role in the global system of cultural production. According to one estimate, 5 per cent of the GDP of Europe and the USA is derived from 'copyright industries' (IFPI, 2008). But does that mean that creativity – from film making to song writing to designing computer games – depends on copyright? This chapter argues that it does not, suggesting instead that the current intellectual property regime tends to inhibit creativity and reduce public access to culture, with especially severe consequences in the global South.

As the standard defence of copyright has it, from the eighteenth century onwards intellectual property (IP) provided the means for the exponential development of creativity, enabling patronage of the arts to give way to a market system in European culture. A golden age followed (schematically, from Romanticism to Rock) in which copy- and related rights fuelled the production and distribution of innovative symbolic artefacts for the benefit of all. However, according to IP defenders, the system is now imperiled by a combination of new ICT technologies, morally reprehensible consumers, and governments unwilling to take the necessary measures to protect creators in this new and dangerous age of globally accessible culture. Over the course of the chapter we will argue that such a defence of IP is mistaken in its premises as well as its practical applications. Most perniciously, perhaps, it has been mobilized as an argument for the *extension* of IP in the period since the 1980s. Content owners have lobbied governments and international organizations for stronger and longer copyright, and to a large extent they have managed to achieve what they wanted. Today we are confronted with an IP regime which is expansionist, even imperialistic, in its global scope and thrust (Hesmondhalgh, 2008).

Now it is fair to say that the editors of this volume for the most part consider globalization to be a good in relation to culture (see the Introduction). This chapter does not challenge such a view – apart from anything else the focus is too narrow for that. It does, however, suggest we need to be extremely wary of the legal and economic frameworks of globalizing culture. By taking up this

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critical approach our hope is to contribute to the renewal of a more rounded modality in cultural studies, one in which tough critique finds its place *alongside*, rather than as an *alternative to*, an affirmation of the redemptive power of globalizing culture.

We begin by sketching the nature, history and extent of intellectual property in relation to culture. The suggestion is that it has always been subject to a continuous crisis, although this is now intensifying. In the second section we then set out the case for a more limited IP regime on both economic and aesthetic grounds, showing how IP is actually opposed to creativity in many forms of popular culture. The next two sections are case studies. One concerns music making in Jamaica, where it is argued that the virtual absence of intellectual property was a condition for the development of a thriving music scene in the 1960s and 70s. The partial introduction of a copyright regime in the more recent period has done nothing to help music making on the ground, or distribute revenues to creative workers on a wider and fairer basis. The other case study looks at 'Bollywood piracy', that is to say the distribution of unofficial copies of films and soundtracks made in Mumbai for markets in the Indian subcontinent and its diaspora.

The chapter concludes by looking at some implications for policy. It is suggested that cultural policy-makers, traditionally concerned with issues of national protection and development via quotas and subsidies, need to take on the issue of copyright. For as globalization and the expansion of the digital domain proceed apace, the politics of intellectual property become acute. Rather than merely responding to the lobbies of the rights owning corporations, states ought to reflect on the cultural needs of their citizens and work accordingly to protect them from the depredations of corporate IP.

Copyright and the crisis of intellectual property in culture

Although other forms of IP, such as trademarks, have some relevance in the realm of cultural production, copyright is by far the most significant of these. We can make a preliminary definition along these lines. Copyright is a type of property in symbolic products ('texts' in the language of cultural studies) which is specified according to law. It confronts the reproducibility of such products by vesting the exclusive right to copy, perform or otherwise reproduce these in an owner (or owners). This is usually the author/creator or a corporation such as a publisher or record company who initiates the cultural production. There is invariably a time restriction on copyright – known as the 'term'. After this period has elapsed private ownership ceases and the work enters the 'public domain', becoming freely available for replication and reuse. A key aspect of the new, more vigorous IP regime noted above is that the copyright term has been getting longer. Thus in the USA copyright now lasts for seventy years after the death of an author, or ninety-five years after publication if the work is commissioned in-house by a corporation (a 'work made for hire', as the law puts it). Figure 7.1 shows the historical expansion of the copyright term in the United States.

As with other forms of property copyright is assignable. In other words, it can be sold or else transferred ('licensed') to another party under more limited conditions – say for a certain number of years, in a specific territory, or in respect of part of a work. This assignability of copyright has enabled a trade in creative rights, and is a key factor underpinning the political economy of the production of culture. Indeed, it needs to be emphasized that historically copyright law has developed hand in hand with the mechanical reproduction of culture and the emergence of the cultural industries. It is the knot which ties culture to capitalism.

The first copyright law was the British Statute of Anne (1710). It gave an ownership right of twenty-one years' term over literary works to booksellers and printers. Printing technology pre-dated the Statute of Anne of course, but the crucial factor at this juncture was the emergence of a powerful printing/bookselling (what we would now call 'publishing') sector, one that was newly independent of state control in Britain. Until 1662 the state had controlled printing through the granting of a licence to the Stationers Company. Only its members could print books. But with the abolition of this monopoly, the established printers began to lobby for a new form of protection, namely a statutory copyright. In other words – and crucially – modern copyright began as a way of preserving the monopoly power of cultural capitalists in a post-authoritarian communication system. In this context, the notion of the right of authors was little more than a post hoc rationale intended to legitimate what was effectively

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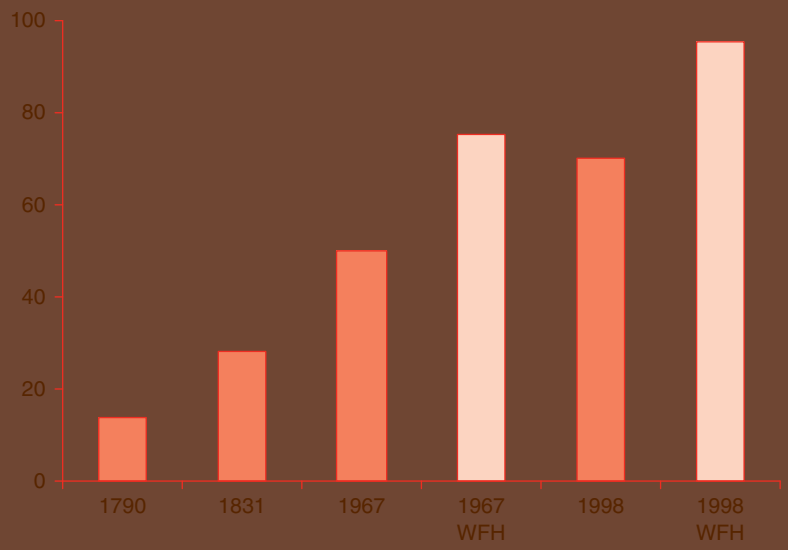

Expansion of copyright term in the USA

Notes

- in 1909 the 28 year term introduced in 1831 was made renewable for a further 28 years.
- in the 1967 and 1998 legislation, term begins from death of the author rather than date of publication as was previously the case; this in itself represents a considerable extension of term.
- notwithstanding the above, in the case of a 'work made for hire' (WFH in the chart) the date of publication still initiates copyright term.

the renewal of the booksellers' monopoly (Patterson, 1990: 9–14).

As we will see this pattern, established at the birth of copyright, has been repeated time and again. Cultural capitalism lobbies the state for new IP measures, while invoking the rights of authors because authors are widely considered the more worthy beneficiaries. In practice, however, the economic power of corporations means that authors will generally assign their rights to a corporation via publishing contracts, record deals, and so on. Quite simply, if you are a vulnerable creator struggling to break into an overcrowded and uncertain labour market (the endemic condition of cultural work; see Miège (1989: 29–30)) then you are hardly in a strong position to bargain about copyright. And yet this does not mean that cultural capitalism exploits copyright without let or hindrance, for in an important sense the copyright system is in a state of perpetual crisis.

Technologies of replication are the original cause of copyright. Only by making symbolic expressions copy-able through material means does the 'need' arise to stop people copying. In fact the history of communications has been one of the continuous development of new media and new forms of replication; hence the periodic demand of cultural industries for the expansion of copyright law to cover such new technologies – whether that be printing, radio, cinema, or MP3 file sharing. This profound instability of copyright is crucial. As cultural capitalism drives ever onwards in the quest for new products, markets and revenues, it keeps having to turn to governments to ensure that the law prescribes ownership in whatever brave new communication medium is being heralded.

The problem of this dependence on governments for the legal protection of ownership is then compounded by a conflict of interest between different communication sectors; namely, content producers who make texts – the objects of copyright – and disseminators such as the broadcasters, cable companies and Internet service providers who distribute them. The former will want to charge or otherwise restrict the disseminators in respect of their use of copyrighted content. The disseminators will naturally want to minimize such charges and restrictions.

The conflict between Napster and the music industry is a case in point. Napster was a service provider

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which enabled subscribers to freely share digital music files across the Internet. Soon after its launch in 1999, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) brought a copyright infringement case against the company on behalf of the five major global record companies. The grounds of the suit were that Napster was responsible for a mass infringement of copyright that was allegedly taking place. In the original case, and then on appeal, the courts found for the RIAA, and Napster was forced to close in July 2001 after less than two years of operation. Bankrupt, the company was bought by a 'legitimate' commercial subscription service, Roxio, in 2002. It is now one of the most successful music downloading services in the world, making profits on its own account, but also posting copyright revenue derived from its paying customers back to record companies and publishers (Burkart and McCourt, 2006: 55–63).

The Napster episode suggests that the historical balance may have swung in favour of the copyright owners. In one early inter-sectoral battle the result was very different. At the end of the 1930s music publishers in the USA increased the licence fees paid by radio stations for the broadcasting of copyrighted musical works. In 1940 they doubled them. The stations refused to pay and set up their own publishing organization (BMI) to provide new musical material instead. In this way they were able to break the traditional music publishers' monopoly, thus effectively winning this round of the copyright wars (Ryan, 1985). Interestingly, this victory by the radio stations played a key role in unleashing a new cycle of musical creativity in North America. The songs which BMI publishers put out included material from the relatively untapped country and western, and rhythm and blues markets. These styles in turn provided key source material for the emerging genre of rock'n'roll in the 1950s (Peterson, 1990).

Perhaps the most significant points to draw from these episodes in the 'copyright wars' are, firstly, that a more open rights regime can foster creativity in quite concrete ways, and secondly, that the present period seems to be one displaying a particularly vigorous expansion of copyright. This historical tendency towards an increasingly powerful IP regime can be seen at the international as well as the sectoral level. During the nineteenth century copyright laws were enacted in all advanced capitalist societies as print media became a major industry. Yet the exploitation of copyright on an international basis remained problematic. For instance, Charles Dickens and his publishers were unable to assert their copyright in the USA. Publishers there simply printed and distributed his work without paying any fees or royalties in respect of what were understood to be purely British rights (Allingham, 2001). Then, towards the end of the century, international treaties were established such that signatory nations recognized the rights of owners in other countries, so enabling a global trade in copyright to develop during the twentieth century.

This international copyright regime has never been secure though. For one thing developing countries have tended not to enforce rights. As gross users of cultural products made in countries at the core of the world system, they have little interest in policing such rights – in this context copyright is effectively a tax on culture. The outcome is that today we have a paradox: the most comprehensive IP treaties and agreements such as TRIPS 1994 and WIPO 1996 (respectively Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights and World Intellectual Property Organization; see Sundara Rajan, 2008) combined with high levels of unsanctioned reproduction of cultural artefacts across the world, or what rights owners tendentiously call 'piracy'.

It seems, therefore, that a central theme in the history of copyright is its agonistic nature. As new technologies of cultural replication develop, so too do new crises arise around the specification of culture as a commodity in law, or via conflict over the access to and control of creative goods. Meanwhile, as copyright has been globalized so too has there been an increase in reproduction and the use of copyrighted content without the permission of rights owners. Critically, this has been happening both in the developing world – particularly via 'old' technologies of replication like photocopying or cassette tapes – and in the rapidly expanding belt of industrialized countries where digital technologies now make our access to culture more open than ever before. These de facto contradictions and tensions raise important questions about whether the present global copyright regime benefits public culture. But there is also a set of theoretical and normative problems with copyright which underlie the practical difficulties. It is these we turn to next.

The suit against copyright: economics and creativity

The rationale for copyright – from a critical perspective, the ideology of copyright – is two-pronged. The

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first aspect is *economic*. According to this intellectual property overcomes a certain problem in culture whereby symbolic objects can be freely appropriated without reference to creators or other consumers. In the language of economics a symbolic object like a musical recording is 'non-rival'. That is to say, it can be used by someone without preventing anyone else's use. And further to this symbolic objects do not degrade though consumption. Using a term from economics again, they do not become 'exhausted' when they are used. We are referring here to the primary text of course – the 'film', 'novel', 'song' and so on – which is then copied, broadcast, downloaded or otherwise replicated. It is the ease of replication at stake here which makes symbolic objects tend towards the non-rival. In practice the material medium – television, CD, book, cinema – adds a degree of rivalrousness. But not much. Replication offers a high degree of share-ability, and this is becoming more the case in the digital age as networks positively encourage the mutual exchange of culture. Music file sharing is the now classic case in point.

As a second aspect, symbolic objects also tend to be non-excludable. In other words, it is hard for creators to prevent would-be users from using them, a key issue if you want to make a charge. Once again, this quality derives from ease of replication, although it does vary in degree across types of cultural artefact. Thus, cinema exhibition enables a high degree of excludability – ushers will check your ticket before you go in – whereas it is impossible to exclude anyone from listening to a conventional radio broadcast once they have access to a receiver.

What does all this have to do with copyright? Quite simply, the argument goes that the non-rival, non-excludable qualities of cultural products make it difficult to sell them for a sufficient return in a conventional marketplace. Take the case of a new computer game. Were it to be released onto the market in the same way as a car, say, so-called 'free riders' would immediately appear and either use the game themselves for nothing, or copy and sell it on to others at a price way below that which the creators needed to charge in order to recover the enormous cost of creating it. In this situation the function of copyright law is to extend property rights beyond the first copy (of a manuscript, recording, director's cut, and so on) to any and every copy over a specified term. Therefore the possibility of making sufficient charges to cover costs, and hence an incentive to create, is restored.

All this sounds fine in theory, and indeed it is widely accepted not only in economics but by states around the world. In effect this economic argument has prevailed in the round of IP expansion which has been occurring since the mid-1980s. But the difficulty is that no case has been made as to how extensive IP rights actually need to be in order to overcome the economic 'problem' of (non-rival, non-excludable) cultural goods. As we have seen the period since the early 1990s has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of copy- and related rights via international treaty and national statutes around the world. The copyright term has grown longer, and now covers more forms of cultural practice and technologies of replication. It has also extended its reach into the poorest countries of the world. Yet there is no evidence that we have seen a concomitant increase in creativity.

Indeed, some economists would argue that the current 'big copyright' regime is leading to *less* innovation in cultural markets. For Boldrin and Levine (2002, 2005) the issue is that IP goods (what we are calling symbolic objects) are not nearly so different from other commodities as is made out in the economic literature. That being the case, through its grant of monopoly IP law simply generates massive costs in the shape of licences and fees and the expenses associated with government lawmaking and policing. Boldrin and Levine take the example of the potato. They point out that, '[w]hen you buy a potato you can eat it, throw it away, plant it, or make it into a sculpture' (2002: 209). But imagine a situation in which rights over the use of potatoes were under monopoly control; every time you ate one you would have to pay not just for the potato itself but also a licence fee to the owner of the potato monopoly. And you would not be able to make a new potato-based product without paying a fee either. In an analogous way, Boldrin and Levine suggest, IP restricts creativity and innovation via the enormous costs it imposes.

There remains the 'free rider' argument of course, the notion that the non-rival, non-excludable nature of cultural goods means that one cannot prevent others exploiting one's own creation. But in response to this Boldrin and Levine (2005) argue that, absent copyright, coming first to market provides a sufficient advantage to enable creators to recoup their costs. This is especially so with network systems of distribution. But actually in all cases just being first gives you an effective if short-lived

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monopoly. In this situation the only IP requirement is a copyright limited to the initial copy of any symbolic product. In other words, up until the point at which the work is released it is protected – after that it is in the public domain.

The case made by Boldrin and Levine is important because it suggests that a 'low copyright' system is not only compatible with a market economy in culture, it actually makes such a market work better. Significantly, the argument of these writers also chimes with the second strand of our argument against copyright ideology. This concerns *creativity*.

When corporate copyright owners make a pitch to governments for larger, longer copyright, or when they call for more vigorous policing of 'piracy', they often appeal to the interests of creators. We noted this tendency in the previous section. For, crucially, the economic rationale of copyright coincides with the Romantic discourse of the expressive author which has had such a pervasive influence in all forms of culture since the end of the eighteenth century. Authorship has of course come in for sustained criticism in cultural studies and related fields. The essay 'The Death of the Author', by Roland Barthes (1977), is perhaps the best known example. It offers a powerful critique of the author cult, but it does not offer much in the way of an alternative account of cultural production, let alone creativity. Instead – and somewhat enigmatically – Barthes focuses on the productivity of texts and language. We need to begin somewhere else, then, if we are to come up with an account of cultural production which focuses on the process through which symbolic objects are actually created and innovation is carried out.

Prima facie it seems clear enough that there are indeed creative roles in the making of culture. The problem comes in defining what these might consist in without slipping back into a Romantic conception, namely where the individual artist is the locus of creativity, and her/his genius consists in extraordinary powers of autonomous expression. As George Steiner (2001: 25–32) has suggested, on this view the creative act is a kind of transubstantiation of the soul. Undoubtedly, such mystical overtones have been very effectively mobilized by defenders of copyright. It is all too easy to imply that vulnerable geniuses, touched by the creative spirit, require the granting of special protection.

However, creativity is arguably much more a matter of 'social authorship' (Toynbee, 2001) than transubstantiation of the soul or expression from within. In the first place, we can note that creative acts are incremental rather than colossal. To make a new aesthetic object is to make one which is marginally different, and a even major figure – say, the Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa – who has apparently made revolutionary transformations can be seen, when their work is examined more closely, to have actually been assembling many small changes in their chosen medium. This cumulative aspect of creativity is connected to a second dimension, namely the collective, or at least interactive, nature of the labour process. To produce a cultural product involves working with other people, both those in obviously creative functions as well as people whose role is more prosaic.

The third aspect of creativity which the notion of social authorship brings out is that acts of creation derive not so much from the autonomous generation of ideas from within as the re-use or appropriation of symbolic materials from a 'historically deposited common stock' (Toynbee, 2001: 2). To be creative is essentially to select, combine and reframe not only themes and ideas, but also concrete bits of 'cultural fabric' (particular scenes in a film, pieces of melody, characters, colours … the list is endless) which are already there.

With these factors in mind, it becomes pretty clear that creators can have no legitimate claim to control the product of 'their' labour once it is done – the basic moral and aesthetic premise of copyright. To make this claim is to argue not only with corporate defenders of Big Copyright, but also those such as Mira Sundara Rajan (2008) who have suggested that a renewed attention to *moral* rights (the rights of authors to claim attribution and assert control over their work) is required in order to counterbalance today's overly economistic IP regime. For the point is that the creative innovations of 'authors' are invariably small and depend on an interaction or collaboration with others in more or less creative roles. Perhaps most damaging of all for the case for copyright, is the fact that when you are engaged in what seems to be the most original act of creation, you are actually using materials already there, left by other creative workers.

In this section we have criticized some key theoretical and normative strands in the case for strong copyright. And we have seen also how an alternative account of creativity under the rubric of social authorship poses a different way of thinking about

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creativity, a way which contradicts some of the basic premises of IP. Over the course of the next two sections we will show how this critique could help to illuminate cultural production today. We take two case studies of creativity in the global South.

Jamaican popular music: blooming in a copyright desert

From the late 1950s onwards a recording industry and a series of popular music styles emerged together in the small Caribbean island of Jamaica. Undoubtedly the appearance of what would become as known as reggae music has proved a major global cultural phenomenon. There can be few other places in the world where such a small population – under two million in 1970, and less than 2.8 million today (Intute, 2008) – has produced so much music. Michael Witter (2004: 32–3) estimates that, despite a decline in its popularity since the early 1990s, international sales of recorded Jamaican music were worth between US $60 and 100 million in 2000. In terms of foreign exchange earned this puts music ahead of sugar, the main product of the island under colonialism.

No doubt a number of factors had played a part in the development of reggae music. Urbanization was certainly crucial; the population of Kingston grew from 237,000 in 1943, to 379,980 in 1960, to 870,000 in 2001 (Clarke, 2006: 91, 154, 267). Proximity to, and hence the influence of, the USA with its modern black popular culture has been important too. But there are also a number of factors to do with the way a peculiarly Jamaican music making culture and economy developed quite apart from the global music industry.

Although various folk styles, notably mento, preceded the emergence of ska at the beginning of the 1960s, it was this style which marked the inauguration of modern Jamaican popular music. Most importantly, ska was almost entirely a recorded form produced in order to supply the sound systems, or mobile discotheques, which from the late 1940s constituted the main musical entertainment in Kingston. In the development of ska – and then in transformations to rocksteady, reggae, dub and a host of later styles – the incremental and collective aspects of social authorship which we discussed in the previous section were key.

We might call the central process at stake here *intensification*, that is to say the production of change through the identification of a certain trope, and then making it more and more salient over a cycle of recordings (see Toynbee, 2007: 87–94). The trope in question in the case of ska was an accent on the offbeat. The source music in which this accent was originally found was 'jump R and B' – the swinging, brass-laden sound popular in black America during the late 1940s and early 50s – which had become a staple of the Jamaican sound systems. One characteristic of jump was a voiced offbeat in the rhythm – the 'da' in the 'BOOM da BOOM da BOOM da BOOM' meter that drove dancers wild. What the Kingston musicians did as they started to copy jump R and B records was accent the offbeat, making it louder and more prominent.

Dating back to 1959, 'Easy Snapping' by Theophilus Beckford (2002) is the tune often credited as the first Jamaican recording with a pronounced offbeat. Of course in the case of a collective and incremental process of creativity it is dangerous to canonize a foundational work. Quite simply, there are always going to be rival claimants from the same period. That said, 'Easy Snapping' is a good example. Beckford sings plaintively in a Jamaican accent, while voicing the offbeat with his left hand on the piano. Three years later, on Bob Marley's first recording, 'Judge Not' (1992) the trope had been intensified to such an extent that it is clear we are no longer listening to R and B. The offbeat is now much stronger than the onbeat in the four/four rhythm. Indeed the onomatopoeic name given to the new style represents this rhythm: SKA_1 SKA_2 SKA_3 SKA_4. There is also a tin whistle playing riffs in the manner of mento, the national 'folk' music style. 'Judge Not' can be considered, then, as a snapshot highlighting the emergence of a highly idiomatic popular music style. Critically, though, it is a style wrought by many cumulative changes across the hundreds of recordings made since the canonical 'Easy Snapping'.

It is difficult to evaluate to what extent this process of intensification was self-conscious. It probably began in a relatively unreflexive way, being expressed in musical practice much more than discourse. However its changes were progressively recognized and codified. In the case of ska the term itself was not coined until 1962, by which time, as we have just heard, the style was already mature.

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Regarding copyright the main point about intensification is its essentially social character. Change was generated collectively in that a whole cohort of musicians in Kingston was involved as a group in the research and development of the new sound. True, there was intense competition among sound system operators and producers in particular. But across all roles (musicians, vocalists, engineers, producers, selectors), and despite divergent material interests and contractual relations, there was effectively a common creative culture. Each would work on the basis of taking things a little further than last time – picking up on a trick used on that big dancehall hit, copying but subtly changing something in order to make the effect even more sublime.

In an important sense intensification makes copyright irrelevant. It points up the thoroughly social character of the authorship at stake in Jamaican popular music, and thus the inappropriateness of attributing the creative value of a recording to an individual. But there is another creative process we can identify in the Jamaican scene which confronts copyright much more squarely: translation. Intensification is essentially an endogenous creative process. Development takes place within a style through the highlighting of a particular aesthetic zone – in the case of ska this was the accented offbeat. We might call this a vertical principle of change. With translation the creative dynamic is horizontal, leading to an appropriation of musical materials from outside the style. Translation thus involves broadening the range of musical signifying rather than deepening it.

In the Kingston music scene since the 1960s translation (and here it is really no different from intensification) can be seen as both an aesthetic and an economic imperative. The economic need is to respond to the high rate of stylistic innovation, generated by the dancehall mode of reception and the voracious demand for new 'record-texts', or 45 rpm singles. In this context, the re-use of existing texts, or the production of same-but-different ones, represents a highly efficient means of solving the problem of the demand for innovation. The aesthetic imperative, on the other hand, derives from a tendency towards a peculiarly Caribbean form of cultural hybridity which Shalini Puri (2004) has identified. The Caribbean lies at a cultural crossroads. It forms one corner of a 'Black Atlantic' trapezium (Gilroy, 1993) along which African diasporic culture has moved, adopting colonial symbols along the way, repeating and changing cultural forms. As Annie Paul shows in this volume (Chapter 11), Jamaican music in particular is driven by a powerfully transgressive urge to express the vernacular Africanism of everyday life – for example creole language or 'patwa', and the *un*respectable pleasures of the dancehall. Here, then, transgression is closely allied to translation.

In fact the initial move which culminated in ska was an act of translation, namely the appropriation of R and B, the music of the black working class of the USA. Since then reggae music has continuously translated music materials from 'outside', most significantly in the 1960s with soul music, and especially the work of Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions. Bob Marley and the Wailers (1992) were only one act among many who used the sound of the Impressions as an imago, a reference point for creative musical transformation. Listen to the group's 'I'm Still Waiting' from 1965, a kind of experiment in the indigenization of the sophisticated soul of the Impressions: falsetto voice and bass vocal response, shimmering reverb guitar, slow tempo, but all re-located to the sonic environment of Kingston.

This kind of translation does not contravene copyright. One of its doctrines – developed in case law – is pertinent here: the idea/expression dichotomy. According to this copyright only covers expressions, that is to say the concrete works, or work-parts, produced by an author. The underlying ideas, on the other hand, may be freely taken up and used to inspire new creative work. Thus copying an idiom such as that of the Impressions, rather than a specific melody or set of lyrics, is allowed under the law. The difficulty, however, is that this distinction does not fit a culture like reggae music which is focused on principles of iteration/variation. (Actually, as John Frow [1997: 210] points out, the idea/expression dichotomy is itself relational, historically contingent, and can by no means be taken as a general rule in culture.)

For there is indeed a translation in reggae music which crosses over into the copying of expressions as copyright law would understand such a practice. Several forms exist. One is the unacknowledged re-use of an existing song. Prince Buster's (2000) 'Don't Throws Tones' [*sic*] from around 1965 uses the melody of 'Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps' from Doris Day's very popular *Latin for Lovers* album,

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released in the USA in March 1965. This adopted English lyrics by Joe Davis, but its melody comes from the song 'Quizás, Quizás, Quizás', written by the Cuban songwriter Osvaldo Farrés in 1947. In Buster's version there is a spoken word introduction by the man himself, a warning to rude boys. This is followed by an instrumental arrangement of the tune. On the CD compilation the writing credits are shown as 'C. Campbell' (Cecil Campbell is Buster's birth name), and the publisher is given as 'Prince Buster Music (BMI)'.

It would, however, be a mistake to see this simply as fraud. Rather it reflects the Jamaican practice of treating the provenance of musical material (in economic terms at least) as irrelevant. What matters in this recording is its trans-aesthetic; the 'ska-ification' of a Tin Pan Alley hit which itself translates the Caribbean sounds of Cuba, 90 miles to the North. 'Don't Throws Tones' represents a cultural return, then, under the aegis of that arch trickster, Prince Buster. Under copyright law, however, it would certainly constitute plagiarism.

Another kind of translation, the riddim, would probably also infringe copyright, but in a rather different way. It differs from the unacknowledged cover version in that it is designed to be copied. A riddim can be defined as the accompanying rhythm track to a reggae tune. It includes riffs or other motifs. Sometimes it is a single, four beat unit; sometimes longer. In its original version it will include vocals. A riddim at this point is simply the instrumental accompaniment to a whole recording. But if it is successful, the riddim is then separated from its original context in order to provide the backing for other versions, or even completely new songs. A canonical riddim such as the 'Stalag', originally by Winston Wright, may have a life of thirty years or more. Perhaps the key point of contrast with the copyright/authorship system (as in the case of rock) is that re-use of a riddim is considered to be an accolade rather than a case of plagiarism. To have your riddim appropriated many times is a sign that you have made a major contribution to the culture (Manuel and Marshall, 2006).

We have been showing how the reggae system of production is inimical to copyright in this section. Indeed there has been little or no copyright litigation until recently, despite the fact at independence in 1962 Jamaica inherited British copyright legislation, and in 1993 brought in its own Copyright Act. However there are now signs that in response to the 1994 TRIPS agreement, which effectively imposes a copyright regime across the globe, the implementation and policing of IP is starting to be taken more seriously (Daley and Foga, 2007). Indeed, Manuel and Marshall suggest that some attempts are now being made to recoup the rights revenue made from riddims (2006: 464–5). Whether the fragile ecology of creative musical work in Kingston will be damaged by this gathering pressure is still unclear. But those who care about the future of this extraordinary music and the culture which has produced it should surely be concerned about such developments.

Bollywood and the pirates

Surprisingly, perhaps, there are significant similarities between creative practice and context in Jamaican popular music, and the Indian popular cinema produced in Mumbai, formerly Bombay. But there are also illuminating differences which help to reveal some further dimensions of the global copyright regime.

Like reggae music, Indian cinema has colonial roots which in this case stretch back to the early twentieth century (Bose, 2006; Kabir, 2001). By the 1930s studios had been established in the cities of Madras, Calcutta, Lahore, Bombay and Pune. Thus the first phase of film production was marked by geographical dispersion. But it was also combined with a degree of vertical integration and corporatism – the studios employed actors, directors and technical staff on a full-time basis. During the 1930s the Indian film musical – 'all-singing, all-dancing' – emerged as a distinct genre. *Alam Ara* of 1931, the first Indian sound movie, led the way. It was released in Hindi (the adopted national language) and Urdu. In the south, there was also regional production of Tamil and Telegu language films. This pattern persists (Curtin, 2008).

After the Second World War and independence from British colonial rule in 1947 the studio system collapsed as new producers and new capital entered the frame. The entrepreneurial system which now emerged depended on freelancing rather than long-term contracts. For Hindi national cinema this organizational informality was also accompanied by an increasing concentration in Bombay (Mumbai). By the early 1960s the 'multi-genre' movie, still popular today, was becoming the dominant form here. This included song and dance,

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but in addition a structure 'in which romance is followed by comedy, then family drama, then action' (Kabir, 2001: 16). A super-star system also became increasingly important. It was typified in the early 1970s by the irresistible rise of Amitabh Bachchan, an action hero still revered today.

In terms of the relationship between copyright and creativity, historically IP has been as tangential to Bollywood as it has to the Kingston music scene. This is because, although taking quite distinct forms from those found in Jamaica, translation and intensification are important in Indian film too. As Vijay Mishra puts it: 'in Bombay Cinema (which began as a colonial form) one of the great borrowed literary forms has been melodrama. The expressive possibilities of this mode … are taken up in a highly localized manner' (2002: 35). In particular, '[m]elodrama acts like a glue that connects discrete texts and generic registers (from realistic to the comic carnivalesque) together' (ibid.: 39). In the terms we were using in the previous section, melodrama – itself a European form – provides a framework for the translation of other pieces of symbolic fabric, including the Indian epic and ur-text the *Mahābhārata*, British novels of the nineteenth century such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights,* or the contemporary fiction of the Indian writer R.K. Narayan (Mishra, 2002: 35–48).

Although these translated components are either out of copyright (the ancient text of the *Mahābhārata* was never in copyright of course) or credit has been given, as with R.K. Narayan in the case of the film *Guide*, this is certainly not true of a host of other appropriations. Indeed, Raman Minhas (2008: 221) estimates that eight out of ten productions are potentially illicit copies, while the blogger known as IndiaTime (2007) makes a similar point, if rather more polemically:

> *For last almost a hundred years now, Bollywood, and the Indian music industry (especially of the popular variety), have been stealing right and left from everywhere else. Movie after movie made in Bollywood steals plots, screenplays, shots, camera angles, dialogs, and background scores from Hollywood. Thousands of Bollywood songs over last fifty years, have come from Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, and the American Billboards.*

IndiaTime makes her/his comments in response to a complaint from Vijay Lazarus, president of the Indian Music Industry Association, alleging that piracy has now become a serious problem in Bollywood. IndiaTime's point is well made, but the issue which arises here is more than one of hypocrisy. Critically, it also has to do with developments in markets and technology.

Whereas the high point for international sales of reggae music came in the 1970s and 80s following the unique and meteoric rise of Bob Marley as a global superstar, for Bollywood significant international sales and revenue have been a more recent phenomenon. Certainly diasporic Indian audiences have been watching Bollywood's products for many years as Kaushik Bhaumik points out. However 'it is only in the 1990s that they emerged as a significant niche in the global market [due to] growing numbers and a radical transformation of youth and middle class cultures' (Bhaumik, 2006: 191). This trend has occurred in the same period that Internet and DVD technology has transformed the copy-ability of films. Meanwhile India itself has seen the development of a large new middle class with access to digital technology.

These factors have undoubtedly fed the recent growth in the Indian entertainment industry – up by 17 per cent in 2007 to reach a value of US $12.82 billion (Asia Law and Practice, 2008), and by a staggering 360 per cent over the period 1998–2005 (Lorenzen and Taeube, 2007: 12). Paradoxically, it is this success which has prompted a recent moral panic about piracy. In April 2008 Ernst and Young India delivered a report on *The Effects of Piracy and Counterfeiting on India's Entertainment Industry*, which attributed the potential losses to piracy at 25 to 30 per cent of profits. It also suggested that more than 700,000 jobs in the entertainment sector had been lost as a consequence of illicit copying. However, the research was commissioned not by Bollywood itself, but by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and the US India Business Council, and it was funded by the Global Intellectual Property Center of the Washington, DC-based US Chamber of Commerce (Nelson, 2008). In other words, the report was the initiative of a US content industry lobbying group, and its data need to be read accordingly.

That said, it may certainly be conceded that an unauthorized distribution of Bollywood films is taking place, and probably on a considerable scale. Prerecorded DVDs sold by commercial 'pirates' are one important medium for this (although Internet

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downloading is also increasing). In the UK market alone a recent report, once again based on industry research, suggests that 70 per cent of Bollywood DVDs found on sale in markets and stalls were counterfeit, compared to only 5 per cent of Hollywood films and music (Cunningham, 2008). In India it is this form of 'piracy' which has prompted the content industry to lobby for an optical disc law that would enable the inspection and summary closure of disc-copying facilities. To date the government has been resisting this (Hindu Business Line, 2008).

No doubt the government is in part deferring to a significant segment of public opinion which would be opposed to the large increases in prices that are likely to follow the suppression of unauthorized copying – should it be possible to do this outside a police state. But actually there is a certain cogency to the 'pro-pirate' view which goes beyond simple opportunism. For as Boldrin and Levine (2005) point out, the economic rationale for any IP measure must be based on the maximization of utility. In this context simply to argue that profits or even jobs are lost is unconvincing. The criteria that really matter are whether innovation is taking place and whether consumers are benefiting from cultural production. As these writers argue, absent an IP monopoly, the much *smaller* revenue stream would still be sufficient to guarantee such conditions; moreover, it is likely to *increase* utility in that prices would be lower, thus leading to greater (and fairer) public access to symbolic goods.

A further point needs to be added. Historically, Bollywood's economy has depended on the exhibition of films. Indeed this is still a core market for the industry, with 70 per cent of its revenues coming from this source in 2006 (Lorenzen and Arun Taeube, 2007: 10). Here, of course, excludability enters the picture. Quite simply, any restriction of digital copying will have little effect on exhibition where distribution circuits are well established, and the turnstile provides a physical means of exclusion. What's more exhibition is now being bolstered by a programme of cinema refurbishment and multiplex construction. As Mark Lorenzen and Arun Taeube note, this kind of dynamic entrepreneurialism does not end here. Bollywood is now vigorously selling films to a profusion of Indian cable TV channels both within and beyond India. At the same time it has been a world leader 'in embracing new technologies for products and platforms' (ibid.: 11). And all this has taken place on the basis of Bollywood's disintegrated and informal industry structure.

In sum, there is a good case to be made that, far from its leading to stagnation or even contraction, the increase in distribution of Bollywood product via unofficial channels ('piracy', in the rhetoric of the US content industry) has gone hand in hand with massive growth and innovation. Whether or not this unofficial distribution has promoted the official market – this is notoriously difficult to measure – there can be little doubt that the openness and informality of the political economy of Bollywood have been a boon (Lorenzen and Taeube, 2007: 12–16).

Conclusions and implications for policy

In this chapter we have examined the surprisingly tumultuous history of copyright, assessed the theoretical rationale for it as well as arguments against, and undertaken two case studies on copyright from the global South. As we implied at the start, there is no attempt at balance here, if by balance is meant coming up with a neutral position. For the objective situation calls for a critical evaluation from which emerge, we suggest, the following theses.

- Historically copyright represents a legal fix for the cultural industries which have attempted to maintain a form of monopoly by trading in and through it.
- The economic argument for copyright as a means of giving an incentive to creators who would otherwise be beaten down by free-riders is weak.
- The suit that copyright rewards vulnerable creators who make the new from their own intellectual and psychological capacities is faulty also.
- More positively, creativity is best considered as a kind of social authorship, one which thrives on a low IP regime.
- Examples of music production from Jamaica show that a market system in culture can work well without effective copyright.
- The case of Bollywood film making suggests that rampant 'piracy' can not only exist alongside a flourishing creative sector, but that it may also bring the benefits of access and affordability to many.

There are surely significant implications for public policy here, and we ought to finish by enumerating some of them.

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